

1919



Issue № 1 — February 2021

ABOUT US

1919 is a joint political journal between the two North American affiliates of the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT), Klasbatalo and Internationalist Workers' Group. We fight toward the historic task of the working class, communism. Communism is the organization of society directly focused on the fulfillment of need in which the antagonism between the individual and collective is abolished. It is a world which knows no classes, property, state, or bureaucracy. In short, communism is the abolition of political society. To achieve this task, we believe the working class must fight on its own terrain to defend against the bosses' attacks, and to push forth its own interest. We are for the formation of the world communist party. We do not believe that we alone will be this party. Rather, we see ourselves participating in the real work that is necessary for its formation.

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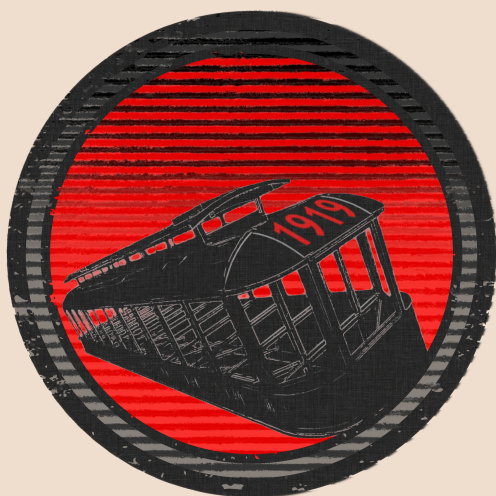
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Closing Intransigence

Intransigence as a project started in 2017. The publication was a vehicle that brought disparate and geographically separated communists together to engage with one another in debate and discussion. The goal was to identify common ground and to identify areas of disagreement, both to clarify commonly held positions and to work out which differences are irreconcilable within the communist left in North America. In one respect, the project always had a terminus. The idea was that the political differences could be worked out, and those that found strong commonality in their positions would regroup. New organizations could emerge, or previously existing organizations could grow stronger through this process. Once those goals were realized, the publication would no longer be necessary, or it could evolve into something else with a new mission. With this note, we are asserting that the time has come for Intransigence to end this chapter, and we are ready to begin a new one.

The communist movement throughout history has been a learning process for militants involved in the struggle. This learning process is scientific in the sense that this experience of the communist movement is cumulative; the goal is to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, and to build off of the successes and proven tactics while maintaining flexibility when intervening in class struggle. One theme of Intransigence throughout our history has been to acknowledge the successes and the defeats, and to acknowledge the sorry state of the communist movement today. That is, the communist movement, which once appeared poised to confront and smash capitalism a century ago, had reached a nadir. The reaction to this powerful communist movement brought about a virtual destruction of the proletarian bonds needed to confront capital on a proletarian class terrain.

Even the remains of the left-wing of capital

appeared scattered and incapable of mounting any campaigns to negotiate away the concessions won in previous struggles. All that appeared left were the fading memories of an era when the proletariat would assert itself. What few remaining organizations that were rooted in the traditions of the communist left had maintained connections to that tradition but were stretched thin. Regroupment of some kind, any attempt to facilitate conversations among communists, was a necessary first step in gauging what possibilities lay before us.

One benefit of contemporary technology has been the ability to easily communicate over long distances. This gave communists a fighting chance in establishing regular dialogue. Despite the immense limitations of social media, this provided an avenue to strengthen ties with communists who sometimes find themselves completely alone in their part of the world. Without connections to principled organizations, the tendency is for atomized groups to diverge and to take up positions subject to local conditions and influence. A well-connected communist movement that maintains these links can maintain an internationalist perspective, something we would argue is a cornerstone of the communist movement.

Intransigence emerged as some communists found themselves floating in a sea of confused ideas and shrinking sectarian political circles. The initial bar was not set high. The criteria for anyone interested in the project was full agreement with a 7-point statement of principles. A full-throated denunciation of capitalism, in all forms including the quite capitalist “actually existing socialist” states, a rejection of cross-class collaboration, a reiteration for the need for proletarian struggle independent of organizations that may act against it, such as unions, and the need for a revolutionary party, were the minimum necessary standard set to begin dialogues. The

initial approach to this regroupment quickly brought a small group together to begin this dialogue. Right away, there was a shuffle of new faces and abrupt exits, which characterized the first phase. With this initial congealment of the regroupment, we were ready to begin writing clarification articles, delving deeper into the positions that are outlined in the statement of principles.

Following the first issue, the regroupment began to gain some steam, and it became clear to us that we should formalize the project, and put effort into reaching a wider audience. By Issue 2, we had built a site, a social media presence, an audience, and had several groups involved in the project. By all accounts, we were succeeding at our initial task of getting enough people together to facilitate a deeper debate on positions where we might differ.

The next phase in our development was where we began to look more critically at our project, our positions, and could begin deriving lessons from this project. The publication began to outgrow the bounds of a typical magazine as contributing authors poured in. Momentarily it appeared that our goal of clarifying positions was being pushed aside in favor of publishing for the sake of publishing. It became apparent that the project was becoming a clearinghouse for ideas that tangentially touch upon our positions. Rather than allow the publication we control to begin controlling us, we reigned it back in and began to reflect more seriously on our task.

With the articles published in Issues 3 and 4, our team of editors became overwhelmed with material, with a pressure to publish without fully working out the political differences. Several articles were published that were controversial even among the organizations involved in the project. The discussions that followed revealed

political disagreements between organizations that could not be reconciled. Some of the organizations involved in the regroupment split from it, and those remaining began to coalesce around a shared political vision.

At this time, we began to reflect on the material from contributors, on the prospect of new groups joining the regroupment effort, and on what lessons we had learned. At this point, the remaining groups involved had grown considerably, and were much stronger having done it. Those still involved were sympathizers with the existing groups that were North American affiliates of the Internationalist Communist Tendency. In our reassessment of the goals of the project, we determined that we had exhausted efforts for regroupment, and instead a strengthening of the associated organizations was proving more beneficial.

The lessons that we learned are numerous. We sought clarity and found it in abundance. We outlined the foundations for organized communists to again intervene in class struggle in the United States and in Canada. However far off the goal of communism may feel to us in the present, steps in the right direction toward that realization should always be met with enthusiasm. While we are saddened to discontinue the Intransigence name, we are not doing so out of gloom and pessimism. Instead, we view this as the beginning of a new chapter—one where the path forward is more illuminated than before. We wish nothing but the best for those who have participated in the project throughout its history. We are also hopeful that the lessons we have learned are retained in memory. And while we may often look to the past for answers, we must also look to the present and future. To belay this point no further, we are excited to announce that our work is unfinished and will continue through our new 1919 publication.



Notes on the impacts of the pandemic on workers

Fighting the pandemic by crushing the working class

Global capitalism and the states response to the pandemic triggered the implosion of the economy. For 37 weeks new unemployment insurance claims in the US were over a million. Worldwide 21 countries are experiencing a famine and 150 million more people have been pushed into extreme poverty as defined in official literature at a miserable \$1.90 a day or less in income. An enormous upwards transfer of wealth has occurred in the name of containing a public health emergency. The left has ignored the impact of this economic catastrophe on workers, sadly predictable as workers are invisible to their own class perspectives.

With the political crisis in the US reaching a new height in the wars between the factions that manage the state and their supporters with the storming of the DC Capitol, while it has left four dead, has not resulted in the fascist coup as imagined in the fevered minds of angry liberals.

The real power of the state doesn't lie with the political front men in power, but behind those it advances into power.

The global standard for extreme poverty currently stands at \$1.90usd. This however doesn't even come close to estimating the extent of poverty. Accordingly the statistics of individual states show much higher poverty rates. Thus the South African government puts forward their own poverty estimate that 55% of the population lives in poverty, while the world bank figure puts it at 18.85%. In historical poverty estimates when a subsistence farmer is torn off the land, their subsequent entry into global labor markets is registered as an increase in wealth rather than reflecting the reality of their dispossession. So when the global economic collapse triggered by the pandemic and the measures states have taken to contain it is said to have forced 150 million people into extreme poverty in 2020, they write of the number of people who are estimated to have \$1.90 a day or less.

In the US state governments took action to im-

pose the lockdowns on a state by state basis. Outside the US this was done mostly on a national basis. This caused a grave impact on a largely service industry oriented working class that was largely depended on smaller employing units for employment. Most jobs in the US are with smaller employers. The lockdown of transportation and imposition of quarantines on travelers hit workers in hospitality very hard. For well over thirty weeks in the US there were over 1 million new unemployment claims a week, unprecedented in the history of their unemployment insurance program.

In India millions of migrant agricultural laborers were stranded in lockdown hundred of miles away from their homes. Cargo ships were stuck in ports paralyzing international trade. With the restrictions on travel and trade, remittances from workers in the wealthiest centers of imperialism to their countries of origin have collapsed. The World Bank estimates a drop in remittances of 19.7 for 2020, signifying a loss in revenue of about \$90 billion.

According to Forbes the worlds 2,200 plus billionaires got \$1.9 trillion dollars richer in total. What is occurring is not so much a fight to protect public health but a means of transferring wealth upwards as fast as possible. This is excellent for the public health of capitalists, but not so much for workers.

Much of the bourgeois left has positioned itself as guardians of public health do not seem to consider the difficulties this poses for workers. Instead they call for a new category of social wage, a universal basic income. The ruling class that did not want to pay other forms of social wage won't pay workers unless they are extracting profits from them. A reform that wont happen isn't going to feed, house or employ anyone. The distance of most leftists from this ongoing experience of the working class greater in this regard. The capitalist class main motive in all things is to accumulate capital while now it hides its true motive behind a mask of false concern for public health.

ASm



Vaccine nationalism

Introduction

At the time this is being written, nearly one year has passed since the first cases of COVID-19 were reported. Often it can feel as if everything has changed since. The initial period of lockdown after the failure to contain the virus cratered the global economy, and while the markets appear to have rebounded, the working class sits upon an eviction time-bomb while lockdowns have made a come-back in the wake of an even larger wave of infections and deaths than the one in March 2020. The system proved resilient to the destruction of the service economy, so long as commodity production continues. Still,

there is a foreboding in the United States that the commodities will no longer arrive on doorsteps, that there will be no tenants to receive them, as the impact of joblessness has only been pushed further into the future by eviction moratoriums set to expire. So, while we feel at present that life has been turned upside-down, we may not yet fully understand what that will look like. With a year of continuous gloom met with worldwide protest, many have put their faith in science to end this nightmare. That is, if there is an effective and safe vaccine that can be administered to produce herd immunity (not of the Swedish variety!), then we can begin to resume life "as normal", in which case we will still need to figure

out what to do about 10 months back-rent.

Even in the life-altering period of early lockdown, researchers across the globe began their search for both treatments and for a vaccine. The treatments, as was hoped, would help reduce mortality and morbidity, perhaps shorten the illness duration, while the vaccine was the golden ticket to putting the pandemic behind us and letting capitalism continue untrammelled by such burdens as “public health”. As it had turned out, our current nemesis, SARS-CoV-2, is related to a somewhat deadlier but less infectious SARS-CoV. This earlier virus rose and fell quickly in world consciousness in 2002-4, but ultimately did not become endemic—that is, just another infection people throughout the population contract. Despite the high mortality, the threat of SARS returning, or the danger of it mutating to be more virulent or infectious, vaccine trials that did begin were eventually closed out, with no progress made toward a viable and safe vaccine for humans.¹ The problem, of course, is that a vaccine for a disease no one presently has surely has no profit potential. Even if it did, trials for vaccines benefit from active spread of a virus by making it possible to assess efficacy. Still, this lack of research and investment in SARS 1.0 meant that when it became apparent that COVID-19 would not go away, the fifteen years to prepare were largely wasted.

Capitalism has produced relative abundance of goods, and technological progress that outstrips past social relations. However, cutting edge technology and thousands of the most brilliant minds were hampered by the sort of systemic disordered priorities of a system built for profit. Even in the world’s best funded laboratories, research in vaccines has appeared to languish throughout the 21st century. After witnessing a mad dash to produce a vaccine for a virus actively leaving bodies in its wake, it becomes apparent that such progress was always possible, it just simply was not important—until it was. When crisis befalls our capitalist system, hindsight is always crystal clear. And while it is

all-too-likely that the bourgeois states and the world capitalist economy will survive this crisis, especially now that vaccines have been approved and are currently being administered, we would benefit from close examination of the process that got us here, to better understand the ways in which, simply put, this all could have gone a lot more smoothly.

The focus of this examination is the process of a capitalist system in crisis, and the goal is to understand how it responds to crisis generally. We would benefit from an understanding that there are parallels between how nations shore up their economy when they are struck by a financial meltdown, or when they are beset by a student debt time bomb, or when a dangerous particle cloaked in spiky proteins empties city centers. These nations do not operate as singular, self-reliant individuals. They operate in a manner that is conducive to global capitalism. Both the state and private sectors work in tandem to ensure growth of the national capital. In capitalism in the contemporary era, the illusion of national self-interest is dispelled by the reality of a global capitalist-imperialist system. And in this system, nations compete over resources, hoping to find new markets, or to off-load finance capital to bring growth to stagnating economies at home. What this pandemic has done, effectively, is disrupt this orderly process of capitalist expansion. The crisis for the capitalist class is not the fear of getting sick (especially whether you get sick). Far from it. The crisis capitalists witnessed was in accumulation of capital.

As we mentioned in a previous article² at the onset of the pandemic, the state would move quickly to do anything in its power to prevent internal market collapse. When crisis strikes, there is always room for state planning and even state production of commodities. The myth that “the private sector does it better” falls away when there is no longer time to debate. In a pandemic of this magnitude, it appeared initially that a public-private partnership emerged in every nation that could afford it. Each of these

countries began attempting to either ramp up production of personal protective equipment (PPE), or to find supplies if they could not make their own. National stockpiles were liquidated and a bidding war for materials ensued.³ In normal capitalist orthodoxy, competition is a lovely thing. In times of great crisis, doctors re-use masks and nurses wear trash bags. At any rate, states taking a more direct role in stockpiling goods in an emergency is nothing new. The scale of these measures illustrated the reality that the market and the state are not opponents. On the contrary, this great competitive battle between nations to get medical supplies provided us with two lessons. First, it is a glimpse at the efforts the state is willing to take when capital is under threat. And second, it reveals that states will be forced to compete and to favor their own national capital over cooperation within the capitalist framework. It is not a coincidence that radical measures were taken after the initial market downturn, only to be ramped up to record proportions once the global markets vaporized.⁴

While the world was shutting down, and industrial production was being re-routed to medical supplies, another major project was underway. Researchers looked at all available information regarding vaccines for viruses similar to COVID-19, and began searching for a vaccine. Nations with the infrastructure and resources to develop vaccines began rapidly funding and mobilizing these efforts. In January, researchers from Wuhan provided the genetic sequence for the virus for testing and research purposes.⁵ Talk of a vaccine came in late February, early enough that most of the world was barely paying attention.⁶ This news was met with little fan-fare, but it is important to note that this relatively new and untested type of mRNA vaccine was created within only 42 days. And in quick succession, several other vaccine candidates would arrive in Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France. In this early stage, researchers had free access to data from one another, and any idea of competition was likely not at the forefront of their minds.

There are, of course many hurdles a brand-new vaccine must overcome to be distributed, mainly testing, approval, and distribution. Those hurdles would exist under virtually any context. However, over the course of the next several months, state and capitalist priorities shifted. In a short time, research went from open-access to highly secretive. Pharmaceutical companies not only wanted to protect their progress from the prying eyes of competitors who could undercut them in the market in the months ahead, but nation states took an active role in pushing the vaccines to market by any means necessary, with the goal of being first. This seemingly humanitarian goal of providing for the public health became distorted by the nature of imperialist capitalism. We have become witness to perhaps three terrible waves of infection and death, while most of the world's population finds itself wondering if the vaccine is even safe to take, or if the vials of vaccine will meander their way through the market in time for them to receive their dose. At a moment where humanity should be celebrating (at least distantly) one of our greatest triumphs, there is a sense of lingering doubt in a brighter future.

Imperialism in the 21st century

The goal of this assessment of the international response to the pandemic is to use deductive reasoning to help understand why, from the very onset, the mitigation efforts and vaccine development and deployment have been botched. To do this we must examine what makes capitalism of the 21st century operate, and for this to be understood, we must understand imperialism. Bukharin's analysis of imperialism in the early 20th century paved the way for the modern understanding of capitalism in its imperialist phase.⁷ He understood that the nation state becomes a mediator for further capitalist accumulation as total national capital becomes highly developed. As the nation's prosperity becomes intertwined with the success of its industry reliant on regionally specific resources, expansion into further territories ensures both that

resources can be obtained, and that finance capital can be invested in agriculture, mining, and infrastructure. Bukharin argued that the international nature of the capitalist market collides with the national interest, leading to conflict. In an effort to explain the world he lived in, one which was unraveling amid a world war, he collected data on everything from production to defense budgets to illustrate that what was happening was indeed the product of a new capitalist imperialism. We will use a similar method, to prevent taking for granted that imperialism is the order of the current day, just as it was in Bukharin's lifetime.

The United States (and sometimes all of NATO) is often identified as the imperialist superpower in the present. Certainly, the United States is a superpower, one with great sway internationally. We should not limit the scope of the analysis of imperialism to US action and inaction, however. In this period, all of the nations of the world are integrated into capitalism, and all participate to some degree in the perpetuation of an imperialist system. We should quickly dispel with any notion of an anti-imperialist bloc within the world capitalist system. That being said, some nations are more powerful than others, and this affords them more influence. The US, Great Britain, and Germany are major players in the pharmaceutical industry, and burgeoning world powers such as Russia and China are also producers of pharmaceuticals. The once-national pharmaceutical industrial giants such as Pfizer in the US, GlaxoSmithKline in the UK, or Bayer in Germany are now vast multinational corporations. These corporations remain profitable largely through the development and sale of prescription drugs such as antidepressants. They also produce vaccines, although research and development has been shrinking as the number of pharmaceutical companies that venture into unprofitable vaccine development has decreased.⁸ Vaccines are administered usually once, perhaps twice, and profit margins tend to be thin. Governments are the largest purchasers of vaccines, typically as

part of vaccination programs. As the profitability of vaccines has declined, so too has innovation.⁹ However, depending on the severity of a disease and how endemic it is to a national population, it becomes the interest of the state to ensure vaccination protocols for certain diseases. This unique problem—the lack of profitability of vaccines alongside the state's interest in procuring certain vaccines—has led to a centralization of the production of vaccines to a handful of the largest pharmaceutical giants. In many cases, such as the earlier mentioned SARS outbreak, the vaccine development stalls the moment the state no longer sees investment as being in the national interest.

Both Bukharin and Lenin¹⁰ observed the decline in competition as indicative of imperialism. As the state moves toward becoming a single buyer, corporations compete for this financial investment, and this leads to the winners becoming ever larger, and eclipsing the total market. The end result in the pharmaceutical sector has been that a few long-standing firms have grown as large as small countries' gross-domestic product. While it was true that Bayer and Pfizer were founded in Marx's lifetime, and were already large corporations in the early 20th century, they are now paradoxically global while being maintained in large part by state benefactors in the form of vaccine development. The relationship between the state and the pharmaceutical industry reached its height in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding for a vaccine, despite the need for international doses, was largely nationally-directed, and with the anticipation that the vaccine would be distributed to the country in question first. That is, that Pfizer's vaccine would be for Americans first, while AstraZeneca's vaccine would be for Britons before anybody else. Indeed, Donald Trump sought this explicitly.¹¹ In the United Kingdom, in its desperation to secure the vaccine for internal distribution, the state ordered enough doses for every citizen to receive two.¹² Unsurprising as this may be, it is not the preferred method of distribution if the goal of vaccination was to

prevent deaths. Medical advocacy groups have advocated for prioritization of front-line medical workers and vulnerable populations.¹³

In a truly worldwide effort to stop a virus that has no conception of borders, these populations would be prioritized in an effort to curb deaths and permanent debilitation as a result of the virus. Instead, countries are compelled to bid on a competitive vaccine market in order to procure the vaccines.¹⁴ COVAX is a mostly toothless effort to ensure poorer countries will have access to the vaccine. So far vaccine distribution is limited outside of the richest countries. Leading the pack is Canada, with 9 doses of vaccine per citizen, and way behind is the COVAX coalition with significantly less than a dose per person.¹⁵ The estimated shelf life for vaccines under ideal conditions is six months, which leaves open the potential for over-supplied countries to waste doses that are not distributed elsewhere in a timely manner.¹⁶ Irrational hoarding of vaccines appears to be the norm in the wealthiest countries. Why this may be the case is unclear at first. Truly the Canadian government was not anticipating that Canadians will need nine doses of vaccine. One possible explanation becomes apparent when you look at the irrational market behavior that occurs during a crisis. In March of 2020, toilet paper disappeared from the shelves across the United States. The need for home-use toilet paper may have increased for people new to working from home, but this doesn't explain the panicked reactions and runs on the big box stores. For those who are not simply seeking to gouge others for rolls once the stores run out, the panic arises from the fear of losing out. The thought process is, "If I don't stock up now, I may not be able to get it in the future." For vaccines, the rationale is similar, but with some key differences. There were multiple vaccines in development, all of which ran the risk of not working. States purchased vaccine doses long before it was known whether these vaccines were proven to work. Since the pharmaceutical companies would not seek to produce billions of doses of vaccine without the possibility of a

return on investment, bidding wars ensued. The seemingly irrational hoarding, it turns out, contains a kernel of rationality. The thought process then becomes, "If we don't buy one of every possible vaccine, Canadians could fall behind the rest of the world in vaccination." The primary reason nations want to be first is because this will provide a competitive edge during the recovery period expected to take place at some point approaching herd immunity.

Although China was the location the virus was first discovered, and where the first major outbreak occurred, the state utilized its muscle to crush the spread of the virus. Severe restrictions early on in the pandemic brought the virus largely under control before other countries had even enacted their earliest restrictions. Twenty-six US States have seen more deaths due to COVID than China. This effort appeared to crater the economy at the time, with some analysts predicting doom ahead.¹⁷ Not only did the crisis quickly reverse, but China is now poised to be one of the few nations to manage economic growth in 2020. Noting this apparent success is not to praise China, and it is certainly not intended to muddle their motivations. The goal of such a strict lockdown was simply to set China on a path to economic recovery sooner than the rest of the world. China's role in the global capitalist economy as one of the primary exporters of commodities for the world market is still in doubt, as global trade has hit barriers¹⁸ With that said, China's internal market is thriving, while other nations are confronted with a new wave of lockdowns. Now, as other world powers seek any avenue to remain competitive on the global stage, adequate vaccine deployment appears to be the only surefire way to recovery. For the United States, the best possible outcome is a distant second place.

In spite of an outward expression of international cooperation, there is little sign that global conflicts have been resolved. The assassination of Qasem Soleimani just prior to the pandemic was a major escalation of conflict between the United

States and Iran that had the world on edge. Over the course of 2020, continued escalation in the South China Sea has gone largely unnoticed, but has led to continued deterioration of relations between China and the United States. These types of geopolitical chess games are not new, but current tensions and a uniquely bad global economy on the horizon. Just prior to the pandemic, US-China relations were also strained by a trade war, and China was experiencing declines in GDP growth signaling that a crisis was already on its way, virus or not. The level of cooperation forged in light of the pandemic could be understood as a trade war cease fire that could quickly unravel. The Biden administration has expressed a more dovish approach to China¹⁹, but this should not be perceived as a sudden fall-back to sunny relations between the two countries. A great deal of damage has occurred as a result of both the trade war and the pandemic causing reduced Chinese exports. As the US economy fails to recover fully in the next year, the ruling class will be faced with mounting pressure to “take on China”.

Cold war and the culture war

There is no indication of a pending invasion or any other catalyst for an inter-imperialist war, but there are signs that tensions are escalating and are becoming reminiscent of the Cold War between the US and the USSR in the 20th century. And China is not the only nation with an interest in seeing a diminishing United States on the global stage. Both Russia and China have been accused by UK and US intelligence of espionage dealing with vaccine development research.²⁰ These types of accusations should be viewed critically, as it is never clear whether the NSA, NSCS, or any other intelligence agency is telling the truth. In either case, there are accusations of tampering with vaccine research as part of an intelligence operation. This suggests motivation to undermine progress on a vaccine that is ostensibly being produced to distribute to anyone who may need

it, regardless of the political borders that encircle them. The question must be posed, why sabotage research for a vaccine? What motivations would there be to see to it that other nations fail to discover or distribute the vaccine first? Delaying the vaccine for a single day could lead to thousands more dead. Is some vague notion of national pride over being “first” to discover a workable vaccine sufficient to explain this? Alternatively, a simpler explanation is that COVID-19 vaccine development is being perceived as a zero-sum game between powers, where the US must lose so that Russia (or whichever competitive power) may win.

In the end, the return of 20th century-style industrial sabotage may not be all that necessary in preventing the recovery of the United States’ economy. Self-sabotage has so far been the most effective. As early as March, members of both of the two political parties in the United States were not ready to face the reality of how threatening this pandemic would be. While Donald Trump has been boorishly contrarian about the threats of the virus, even liberals like New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio were going to the gym, and encouraging bar hopping in a reluctance to accept the economic turmoil ahead. Since then, the Democrats have taken a cartoonishly arrogant approach to quarantine, distancing, and masks that is out of touch with the reality for the workers who have not been able to stay home or distance if they want to survive. American political discourse has deteriorated as the virus became politicized. It is no longer a matter of established fact that the virus can be spread more easily through close contact by those not wearing masks, that it is dangerous or deadly. Instead, the country is divided down the middle, with one side claiming the mantle of science and medicine, and the other claiming to stand for freedom and jobs.

This culture war is a largely online phenomenon. The working class wears masks because they are required by employers or by the state, and because they have become a necessity to hold

off the inevitable outbreak. Essential workers that have witnessed outbreaks in their plants or in their stores, or who have become infected themselves are not living in the world of hypotheticals on these issues. The unemployed, the unoccupied small business tyrant, the locked down retiree, and others like them have been consuming nothing but media for nearly a year, slowly being radicalized into one or the other of this strange new type of culture-based identity army. With everyone about as atomized as humanly possible (all intentionally), real social bonds are deteriorating between families and friends, while new social bonds between alienated sects of conspiracy theorists have replaced them. This year has seen rapid growth of a far-right extremism built on the cult of personality around the president, and fueled by grievance politics. Believing that the virus is a threat is a signal of one's membership in one or the other faction. Anti-vaccine politics, once perceived as the domain of vaguely left-wing hippies, has been absorbed into far right conspiracy theories about microchips and Bill Gates. With hundreds of thousands of Americans already falling victim to the virus, it simply isn't clear that a vaccine roll-out will be successful if only one camp in the culture war is even willing to take the vaccine.

Distrust in the state has reached stratospheric heights, and a large part of this distrust stems from mixed messaging around the virus. The president himself appears to be a champion for the vaccine, which is an about face from his previous distrust in vaccines. His supporters certainly seem more resolutely opposed to vaccines than he is. Combine this suspicion of vaccines with the belief that masks either don't work or are a form of totalitarian control. Further complicating things is the petty bourgeois push to reopen everything, to get customers back into the bars and restaurants. Now, in what could only be understood as an even worse second wave of the virus, the hope of some sort of "return to normal" appears impossible. COVID-19 has a high mortality rate, and spreads via aerosolized

droplets from coughs and sneezes, and spreads more easily in crowded indoor settings. The vaccine offers the safest avenue to herd immunity and reduced carnage as a result of the pandemic. All of this remains true separate from the passions of the culture warriors. It is also true that the conditions of capitalism push workers to want to return to work to survive, to distrust a state that has had a checkered past when it comes to vaccination or social control. Scientific distrust should not be understood through the lens of bad ideas spreading uncontrolled, and unmotivated by rationality. Instead, it should be understood as a product of the conditions in which people currently live, where workers were already under assault prior to the pandemic, and now are being asked to sacrifice potentially everything for something they must rely on authorities to understand. This distrust in the institutions is a product of alienation as well. As social cohesion dissolves, people find new communities, and communities that offer some kind of release from the pain of this isolation, such as QAnon, become attractive. As ludicrous as their theories are, they fill a void for those with weakening social bonds. While these movements are spearheaded by elements outside of the working class, many workers have already been drawn in. Those who have a limited collective memory of their own class may see these theories as a grand narrative to explain something they struggle to articulate. In any case, these movements hinder and harm the potential post-pandemic recovery for capitalism.

While it is not the task of communists to rebuild a trust in scientific institutions, this pandemic raises questions about how a communist society would deal with future pandemics or natural disasters. Capitalism in its ascendant phase produced an enthusiasm for the marvels of science and medicine. Now, as capitalism declines, we see trust in institutions evaporate. This undermining of science only weakens the capitalist system further. In the case of the United States, years and years of culture war battles over taking the shot could lead to an endemic COVID-19 that

keeps the economy regionally depressed for years to come. Much of this could be avoided if the motivation was simply to save lives, and was not complicated by profit, national competition, and misinformation campaigns.

Conclusion

Vaccines are now being deployed to medical workers, and soon to other vulnerable populations. The vaccine rollout is going wrong in many ways, including vaccines being wasted²¹ and many medical workers refusing to accept it.²² The roll-out plans carried with them assumptions that people would be lining up to demand the vaccine, so that life could more quickly return to normal, but it appears that few are convinced “normal” is achievable or even desirable. The road ahead for competing nations hoping to reach herd immunity will be fraught. Conflicts that have been postponed but not resolved will continue to boil over. While

financial markets have been soaring, this will not be sustained if profitability is not restored in the near term. Although the recent Capitol Hill protest forced the Republican party to issue an ultimatum to President Trump, it is unlikely that these politicians will cooperate with the Biden administration, further complicating recovery efforts. The antagonisms brought on by this economic stagnation push the United States, and by extension its allies, into a corner where it may be compelled to act more aggressively on the world stage. The UK, Russia, and China also face unique troubles ahead regarding trade and economic growth. This year will be a test of what nation states are willing to do in order to achieve stability and to avoid further economic tumult. Whichever direction events turn, the working class are mere observers as these states scramble to manage their diminishing capital.

Magnus Zeller

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Reopen or close schools: A lose-lose situation for the working class

The United States is now infamous across the world for, among many other things, an extremely poor handling of the Coronavirus, especially given the resources at its disposal. The weeks after the first confirmed cases of Coronavirus in the country were marked by denials of the severity of the virus, or even of the very existence of the virus at all, by the Trump administration. Any semblance of action that recognized the virus as the emergency that it was was not taken until early March, by which point it had had ample time to spread across the country.

The actions taken by both the federal and state governments consisted of very selective closures of certain businesses and workplaces, a pitiful and lackluster attempt at providing PPE and other safety equipment to those workers that were deemed essential to keep society and the economy running, as well as the shutting down of most schools across the country and transitioning to online learning for students and teachers.

In reality, these measures taken by various levels of government across the United States were too weak and ultimately insufficient to contain the

pandemic, as capitalism is incapable of doing. Eventually even these paltry measures would end up undone by May, not as a result of the dangers of Covid receding or the “curve being flattened”, but instead due to a desire by capitalists and their politicians to increase profits by putting the working class back to work. The results of forcing workers back into dangerous work situations because of the virus are clear from the now over 330,000 deaths from Covid in the United States alone.

One of the sectors of society which faced a slower reopening effort were the schools. Unlike most businesses, schools were not reopened in May and June, but remained closed for the rest of the school year. Any attempt at reopening schools in those waning weeks would have been futile as school would end up closed again soon just by virtue of summer break.

Over the summer, efforts were made towards reopening the schools across the country, and in most cases these efforts have won out. While it’s easy to think of this as being primarily spearheaded by Republicans, Democrats took what is essentially the same position, with politicians such as Bill de Blasio in New York or Joe Biden nationally calling for the reopening of schools and an end to online learning, only without the rhetoric of fervent science denial. School in the fall for many children ended up as either a crowded petri dish for spreading Covid with little safety protections, or as an even more miserable and surveilled location where the fun social interaction that used to get them through the day is no more.

Some students, where it was possible, opted to continue online learning, or simply did not have the choice of returning at all. These students generally remained in the minority. Now that winter weather has arrived and virus cases and deaths are surging across the country, many more students have been put back into online learning and more schools have shut down. While this certainly is a win for public health, it

conceals the reality that for many students from working class families, online learning means continued or even increased hardship. Such is destined to be the case under capitalism, where the working class is hurt by all of the supposed solutions of the capitalists. Inequalities in education for working class students are dramatically increased, and certain workers at the schools are hurt by these changes as well. Therefore while schools should be closed to prevent more excess deaths from the Coronavirus, it must be understood that capitalism offers no solutions for working people, and even when choosing the option of public safety, the working class is made to suffer.

The impact of school reopenings on students

For the past several months, school for students of all ages has become even more like a prison than before. Students get in line to enter the school, one-by-one and spread apart as temperature checks are done on them before they enter. The regimented shifts between classes has seen its strictness and regulation increase even further, as efforts to minimize contact have been put into place. Instead of casually walking down the hallway, students get in line and perform supervised walks down predestined routes around the school to get to their destinations. Once in the classroom, students no longer even have the solace of being next to some of their peers that they can talk with to help them get through eighty boring minutes. Now, the numbers of students in the classes are smaller and the students are spread far apart from each other. Masks increase the distance between students in an emotional way as opposed to physical, as students can no longer see each other’s faces. These measures are no doubt necessary if students are going to be in schools, yet this only furthers the case that students should not be in schools. The result of all of these measures in schools is a certain alienation felt by many of the student body, especially for those students of the working class, for whom school has always felt

even more like a tiresome and boring ordeal, simply designed to prepare them for their future as workers.

All of this general miserable experience is on top of the actual academic problems that afflict students when attending school in-person during Covid. Primarily, for many students anxiety and paranoia due to worries about the virus, as well as the potential of it infecting them and their family due to their presence in the classroom have only increased the usual mental overload that school brings. Instructions and lessons from the teachers go through one ear and out the other as students are more preoccupied with thinking about the safety of perhaps their peers or families than with the material being taught.

Of course, there are many schools in which this is not the case, and where regulations surrounding Covid are lax and unenforced. In such schools, the aforementioned worry which latches onto students that may live with immunocompromised family members is even more pronounced. Covid also generally spreads much easier, which not only creates problems for immunocompromised students, but reverberates even further to the school staff and the students' families.

School reopenings for school staff

Keeping teachers at work in schools brings with it a significant risk of them being exposed to Covid. Spending the entire day inside the classroom or hallways means exposure to a vast number of people which then increases the risk of contracting Covid. For many teachers, this does not just mean staying home for two weeks (which may or may not end up paid). According to statistics from 2012, 18.8% of teachers in the United States are over 55 years old. While this statistic has almost certainly changed in some way since then, the fact remains that a good portion of teachers are at an age that is vulnerable to Covid. This means that many teachers, because they have been forced to continue working in-person, either have to deal

with severe and painful health complications as they are treated in the increasingly overflowing ICU beds or worse, death.

Teachers across the country have demonstrated an understanding of their dangerous situation and have engaged in walk-outs, sick-outs, and even raised the possibility of strikes in response to school reopenings. Unfortunately, these strikes failed to materialize on a mass-scale due to the hold of the unions over the teachers.

The virus does not just psychologically hamper teachers when teaching in-person through fear of infection. The straining effects of keeping schools open for teachers are much more mundane, and involve the extra work of keeping the classroom sanitary. Enforcing mask wearing and social distancing, along with other health and safety measures, has proved quite difficult and something of a logistical nightmare in terms of effort and cost. The teachers are now the workers tasked with the job of making sure that health and safety regulations are followed in the classroom. In addition to their normal burden of teaching, managing the classroom, and preparing plans, lessons, and assignments, as well as grading student work, much of that labor unpaid or poorly compensated for, teachers will then be saddled with even more work, which will, like most of the previous described work, go unpaid except out of the teacher's own pockets.

In addition to making sure that health guidelines are followed in the classroom, many teachers have to deal with the burden of teaching both in-person and online. Some schools have offered students the choice of whether they attend classes in-person or online. Teachers are then forced to make a sacrifice. Either they teach the students in-person while filming themselves on Zoom, to the detriment of the online students' engagement with the course material. Or, they sacrifice their own time and energy towards making sure that those other students have equal and ample resources, through either making instructional videos for them or having separate zoom classes with them.

A teacher interviewed by the New York Times spoke about this situation that she is in, and stated that “the days where it’s 13-plus hours at school, you’re just exhausted, hoping to make it to the car at night”. Many teachers have now been tasked with teaching double their classes.

As is typical of capitalism, this work has gone unpaid. Teachers have not been compensated for the immense amount of extra labor that they are exerting, in addition to their “normal” load from before the pandemic. Any case of a salary boost for teachers this past year has been an exception to the rule of miserable wage labor combined with cynical thank you’s. And even where the salaries of teachers are boosted, these increases can often be negated by the PPE and cleaning equipment that teachers buy out of their own pockets, just like they do with most classroom supplies.

Teachers are not the only ones that are conscripted as working class cannon-fodder for the economy and “normality” against the virus. Janitorial staff, who are already underappreciated and underpaid, are, like their companions teaching in the classrooms, required to perform Herculean loads of tasks in order to ensure the safety and cleanliness of the schools. In addition to the cleaning work that they already had to do, they need to use extra precision and effort in disinfecting classrooms, hallways, and buses, all while potentially exposing themselves and their families to the virus. This extra work has not resulted in any extra pay for janitors. Instead, they face demands for increased productivity with no pay raise.

Bus drivers also have it tough with school reopened. In some cases, schools have split up the sizes of students at school each day as part of a de-densification process, with students rotating being either at home or at school. Part of the reason for this is that without doing so, the busses would be so crammed that they would naturally become petri dishes. One student is assigned to a row on the bus on each side of it.

This is not always the case, and in some areas the busses take students to school just as before, except with masks and plexi-glass separating the driver from the students. In this case, the busses become serious health risks, all the more so to the bus drivers. The drivers then have to pay, potentially with their life, for the schools staying open. In either case too, whether or not the drivers actually contract Covid, they are compelled to perform more work without any pay raise. The bus drivers are now responsible for completely cleaning and sanitizing their busses after every usage with their normal pay. Throughout all of these cases of the workers in the schools, whether they be teachers, janitors, or bus drivers, there is a common theme: more work and the same pay.

School reopenings for working class families

The children that attend school come home after their classes. This brings with it the risk that the students infect their parents after catching Covid at school. The reverse is also true (and arguably happens more often), that students bring the virus with them from home to the schools. Multigenerational households have been put the most at risk from Covid, with the older members of the household vulnerable to the virus and often contracting it from the younger members of the house. These households tend to be working class, as young workers have for some time been increasingly unable to afford their own homes, and they are also more likely to be Asian, Hispanic, or Black, due to both cultural customs as well as their disproportionate membership in the working class. The damage inflicted by Covid on these sorts of working class and multigenerational families has only been increased by school being open.

School closures for the working class in the United States

Keeping or reverting to online learning and enforcing a general lockdown is not a simple

solution to the issues faced by working families in the United States. With schools closed, parents must juggle working either from home or at the workplace with watching over the children. Teachers and the other school staff have faced precarity and even job losses. The students have been subjected to a boring and alienating social experiment which deprives them of social interaction while heaving the same or a greater workload on them. The poorer working class students also face difficulties in participating in their education due to a lack of proper internet connection and other resources. In short, while school closures are certainly better for public health, this option still leaves out the working class under the rule of capitalism.

The effects for working class parents

Having children carry out school from home puts an added burden on many working class parents that spend the day away from home. This year has demonstrated, more so than any other, that nothing is more important to capitalism than the pursuit of its profits, including the health and lives of its workforce. Most parents have been either forced back into work or have simply never been able to work from home in the first place.

The working class parents of younger students in Elementary school have now been facing a challenge. They are confronted with the task of how to watch over their young children that are now attending school from home. For many families this means keeping one of the parents at home, at the cost of being unable to work. Babysitters are a risky option for families with members that are immunocompromised. School closures under capitalism have forced a sizable number of working class parents to choose between working and ensuring that the family has enough to pay the bills, and watching over their young children to ensure that they are cared for throughout the day.

School closures for teachers and school staff

The fact that teachers may in some instances have a smaller workload due to virtual learning is small compensation for the poor situation that large numbers of school staff have been put in. Substitute teachers, janitorial staff, and bus drivers have all experienced similar problems in regards to their employment status working for the schools.

Online learning has largely rendered substitute teachers' jobs redundant. The beginning of the pandemic and the shift to virtual school in the United States meant job or payment losses for large numbers of substitutes. The day-to-day substitutes that are on-call for days where teachers are sick have been in the worst position out of all of the subs. Teachers are now able to teach their classes from home even while sick by simply sending out filler assignments. This means that these subs have largely been "thrown under the bus" as a Nevada substitute remarked in March. Many of them have simply been fired outright, others find themselves trapped in a continual precarious position. What makes matters worse for substitute teachers is that even in cases where the pay of teachers in situations like this may be covered by union-negotiated agreements, the substitutes, especially the day-to-day ones, are often left out. According to Francisco Negrón, who is the chief legal officer of the National School Boards Association, "in most cases . . . day-to-day substitutes are not included in collective bargaining agreements." This means that school closures and online learning bring with it unemployment and destitution for many substitute teachers.

Janitors find themselves in a similar position to substitutes. With the lack of use of school facilities, the work required by janitors has significantly decreased. Due to children not attending the schools, there is only an occasional need for cleaning in the school such as special events or routine maintenance. Besides those

circumstances, many janitors have been put on the dole. Whether or not they have been retained depends in many cases on the unique circumstances at the school in question, such as to what extent their learning is online, the funding that the school has to make use of, and whether union agreements include them. Regardless, the number of janitors that have, like the substitutes, been laid off or otherwise put in a precarious work position has been large and a widespread distribution of the vaccine as well as the end of winter are far away and provide little solace to janitors that have been out of a source of income.

Perhaps in an even worse position due to school closures under capitalism than the janitors are the bus drivers. Online learning has meant that the job of the bus drivers at school has become obsolete, as children no longer require rides back and forth from school. Therefore, school districts throughout the country that have turned online have laid off bus drivers in droves. This means job loss and economic privation for these workers. In most of these cases the bus drivers haven't been able to secure any sort of pay from the school for the duration of the time that they haven't been working.

Cafeteria workers are in essentially an equal state with the bus drivers during online school. Like the drivers, the job of the cafeteria workers has also been made redundant in many cases. Some schools with hybrid learning or, if they are able to afford it, have been able to keep the cafeteria workers serving food to children that need it, yet this is something out of the reach of most students in the working class and they must instead find meals at home. Cafeteria workers have been laid off across the United States and by the end of the year this has resulted in massive job losses. They have been treated as expendable, a far-cry from the cynical appreciation for essential workers that was paraded in March and April through military aircraft fly-bys. The workers in schools have suffered incredibly from school closures under

capitalism, and for many of them it has meant losing their livelihoods and having to find work elsewhere if possible.

Online learning for working class students

Finally, what must be examined are the effects of online learning for the students themselves. School has already before the pandemic been a mind-numbingly boring and alienating experience for many students. It is an institution that has been designed to prepare students for their future role in society as proletarians. Not only does it teach them some of the skills and education necessary for them to function as efficient workers. It also trains children in a regimented routine that parallels their future daily schedules of work, errands, sleep, repeat. This is accomplished through having students wake up at ungodly hours, complete the daily pilgrimage to the bus stop, get herded to school and then sit still for six or seven hours while teachers that are exploited themselves feed them information as if the students are recording devices. The students are then given their nightly homework assignments, often so hefty that they are forced to sleep an unhealthy number of hours, with sometimes the only method of mitigating such sleep deprivation being a near-complete abstention from fun or recreational activities, something which only further contributes to the alienation and mental health issues suffered by many students. All of this activity which is so deteriorating towards the mental and physical condition especially of working class students is carried out just so that they may capture the possibility of not being trapped in a vicious cycle of debt for the rest of their lives when they go to college, which represents the hope of leaving the working class for a better life.

Schoolwork is already a boring and debilitating ordeal. While there is the end goal of getting the proper grades and habits to be admitted into a good college or university after middle and high school, in the moment all of that work tends to

appear to lose its purpose. This issue has only been compounded through virtual learning. The lack of being in an actual classroom where one is truly able to interact with their teachers and peers, as well as the absence of being in an environment where our bodies are conditioned to do that work, have both had negative effects for students academically. They have been expected to fulfill their usual tasks in their rooms by themselves where it is easy to lose motivation and feel removed from their schoolwork, as their permanent environment for work is now one that they associate more with freedom from their school work. This has been a noticeable trend and has negatively impacted the grades of many students.

Besides lacking motivation to complete work, the fact is that the online learning process has in many ways become an experience of self-learning for many students. The limitations of online learning are quite easy to be felt as subjects become harder and more advanced, and crucial concepts related to those subjects become harder to be conveyed through Zoom calls and without human interaction. Many students have been left to teach difficult subjects to themselves at home using textbooks or online explanations in the absence of a real interactive and effective learning environment. The absence of in-person engagement with the teacher, coupled with the same academic expectations for the class, means that many students have been facing extra hurdles in their learning which hurts their grades and dampens their futures for getting into college.

Regardless of the previously mentioned challenges, for some students those aren't even issues at all. This is not because they have found ways to surmount them, but because they don't even have the prerequisite to dealing with those problems in the first place. That is, for a large number of children, 9 million exactly (out of a total 56 million), internet access and/or access to a computer is simply not a reality. As is typical of American capitalism, there is a racial dimension

to these statistics as well, with blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, and other ethnic minorities bearing more of the brunt of this lack of access to the internet. Facing even more challenges than that, some 1.5 million students will also experience homelessness during the academic year (although those numbers may be considerably higher given that those are statistics from 2018 and don't account for the mass wave of evictions that appears grimly possible in early 2021). What these numbers and this reality mean for these students is that they are essentially excluded from the education process for this year. They are going through the experience of missing out on a crucial year in their life that is needed to allow them to have the least chance of surviving on the job market in capitalism. For these students, under capitalism even the safer option for public health results in their abandonment and getting thrown under the bus.

What option exists for the working class?

There are many obvious problems with reopening schools or keeping them open. The experience of school is significantly diminished for the students attending, resulting in an even more alienating eight hours of their day. In the schools that do not even have proper Covid safety precautions, the schools and the students themselves easily become carriers for Covid. School staff such as teachers, janitors, and bus drivers, like many other workers in the United States, become conscripted as cannon-fodder for the process of the reification of wage-labor, with their deaths from Covid seen as a necessary sacrifice. Increased amounts of labor are also unloaded on all of them with no boosts to their salaries or wages. In other words, they face increased exploitation this year. Working class families that live in multigenerational households are put especially at risk by keeping schools open, as the young students may then transfer the virus to their older relatives that live in the house. The safety and continued existence of tens of thousands of people depends on keeping schools closed so that Covid in the United States and in

the world has greater difficulty in spreading, something which seems like an impossible wish at the beginning of 2021.

However, it is also just as necessary to point out the limitations and problems that will still affect working people because of capitalism with school closures. Working class parents are torn between watching after their young children throughout the day as they attend school from home, or going to work to keep the bills paid. Substitute teachers, janitors, bus drivers, and cafeteria workers have throughout the year found themselves having been laid off and lost their jobs, as the jobs that they filled are no longer necessary for the schools due to online learning. Students face a more challenging learning experience with nothing to compensate them for it, often having to teach themselves the material of their classes due to the limitations of online learning. The students of the poorer and more exploited sections of the working class also encounter an even larger difficulty with online learning, as they in many cases do not even possess a proper connection to the Internet for financial reasons.

Schools should obviously be kept closed to prevent the spread of Covid, yet this is only one piece of the puzzle. Keeping schools closed while keeping alive the capitalist system that brings with it the exploitation and destitution of the working class leaves everyone in the same position as before. The United States, like every other country in the world, is a capitalist dictatorship where political power is concentrated in the hands of the owners of capital, whether they be private multinational companies or the state itself. Whatever form these owners take, they all share a common interest in maintaining their class dictatorship over the vast majority of society, those who

produce the very capital that they own, the working class. The capitalist class has its interest in squeezing every last ounce of profit out of the working class, and even during pandemics and crises, when working people need relief the most, the capitalist class refuses to lend a helping hand. In fact the capitalist class proves itself to be even more greedy and miserly in such times, unless it comes to spending huge amounts of capital on the national and international security forces of capital, the police and military.

That is why it is useless to talk of any sort of solution to the woes faced by working people if the system of capitalism is maintained. This system is predicated on the exploitation and domination of the working class by the capitalists, and on the monopoly of all political power in the hands of the capitalists. Therefore the working class has lost before it even fights if it aims only at piecemeal reforms within the system, hoping to somehow mould a system diametrically opposed to their interests into being a little less suffocating. The only path forward for the working class is international revolution against the capitalist system. To go down any other path only means taking different routes to surrender and continued exploitation.

Workers need a party to express these international shared interests in ending their own exploitation. This is the task that the Internationalist Communist Tendency globally and the Internationalist Workers' Group in the United States strive towards fulfilling.

Whether schools open or close, the winner in both cases is the capitalist class and the eternal losers are the workers. The only option for workers is to see the false choices that this system offers for what they really are and fight back.

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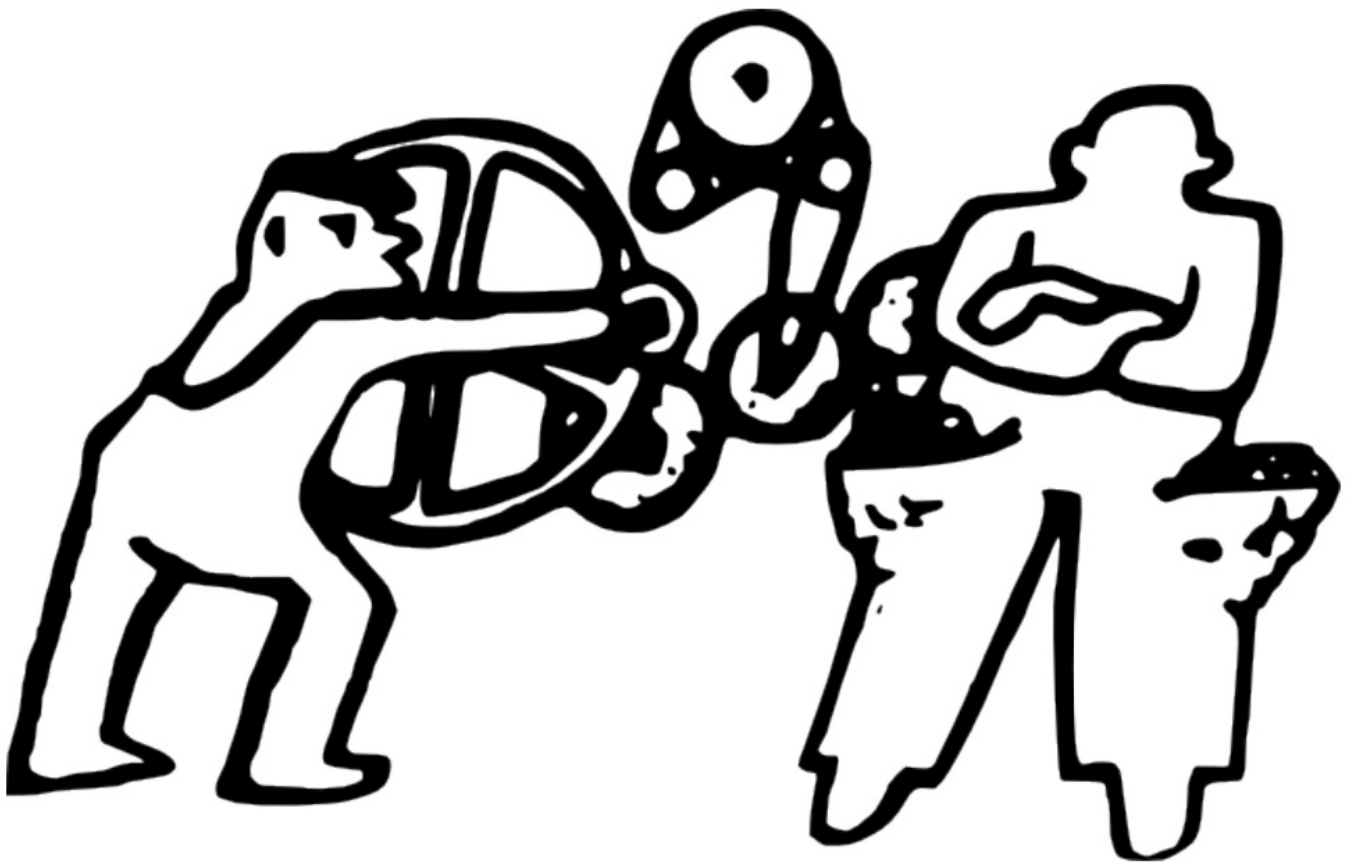
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New year, same crisis

1919 Introduction

As of 26 January 2021, the total number of COVID-19 cases has now surpassed 100 million globally, the number of deaths is up over 2.1 million, and the amount of people who have received at least the first dose of a Coronavirus vaccine stands around 80 million. The United States remains the hardest hit country by COVID-19 infections, with cases now greater than 25 million and more than 420 thousand deaths, around a quarter of fatalities have been over a 6-week period throughout December 2020 and January 2021; on 12 January, 2021, the country experienced its most shocking day yet, with a new record of over 4,400 people losing their lives to the virus in one day.

Throughout the first month of this year the devastating impact of the ongoing global

pandemic, on top of the usual struggles with wage-labour, unemployment, and furloughs have remained a heavy weight on the shoulders of the working class; the wealth of billionaires has continued to rise, the position of “richest person in the world” now shifting back and forth between Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos as Tesla and Amazon shares rise and fall.

In the United Kingdom a highly infectious “super-strain” of COVID-19 sent country into its third national lockdown on 5 January 2021, with no official end date given by Prime Minister Boris Johnson other than “by the middle of February; if things go well [with the roll out of COVID-19 vaccines]”. In Australia, Brisbane entered an intensive 3-day lockdown as of 8 January 2021 due to one case of the strain being discovered in hotel quarantine.

Below is the republishing of the article we wrote at the end of 2020 which sheds light on the conditions of the working class and the amount of waste that is produced throughout the "Holiday Season".

Internationalist Communists Oceania (Sympathiser group of the ICT in Australia)

New Year, Same Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has left the entire working class living with a new level of uncertainty. There have now been cases reported on every continent after researchers and military personnel on Antarctica recently reported their first cases. As of 29 December 2020, there have been over 81.2 million COVID-19 cases and 1.77 million deaths. The virus has had the greatest first-hand impact on the disabled, older generations, and racial/ethnic minorities – killing them at a disproportionate rate. However, many survivors of all ages and races/ethnicities have been left with chronic illnesses – having been completely healthy prior to being infected – or the worsening of pre-existing conditions. So far the richest country in the world, the United States, has been hit the hardest, with over 19.3 million of their nearly 330 million population having caught the virus and 335 thousand of those people having died. Following behind them in the top 10 is India, Brazil, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Italy, Spain, and Germany.¹

The virus has posed not only a significant risk to the health of workers around the world, but it has also helped further increase already high rates of exploitation, homelessness and housing unaffordability, unemployment, mental health issues, domestic violence, food insecurity, and personal debt. The pandemic has also deepened the humanitarian crises that are present around the world. The largest of which is currently taking place in Yemen. The past 6 years of 'civil' war have destroyed infrastructure, sanitation systems, medical centers, and food distribution

capabilities, on top of killing roughly 250,000 people. The shortage of resources, rise in food prices/decline in currency value, starvation and the spread of cholera, diphtheria and dengue fever have had health and medical workers deem COVID-19, and the 2,000 cases they have had, as being far from their most pressing concern.²

The environmental crisis also continued to wreak havoc around the globe. Around 100 companies remain responsible for over 70 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions. The ongoing plunder and destruction of the natural environment forcing small animals into cities and the existence of factory farming are both major players in the spread of disease – while also causing significant amounts of pollution to the air and water. Over the past year and a half we have seen some of the worst wildfires on record in California and Siberia. There have been horrific floods in China, not seen on such a level in over 20 years, and devastating flooding and landslides in Brazil. In the Pacific Islands, the tropical cyclones Harold and Yasa have torn through and left thousands of people homeless. The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season saw the highest number of storms on record by reaching 30 in total, with hurricanes such as Eta, Iota, Laura, and Delta killing hundreds and otherwise devastating parts of Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, Alabama, and Southwest Louisiana. During the 2019-2020 summer in Australia (also known as 'Black Summer') the country experienced the worst bushfire season on record. Now as 2020 turns into 2021, over the past several months, there has been some of the most destructive and largest amounts of summer rain, flooding and beach erosion that New South Wales and Queensland have experienced in decades; it took over 8 weeks to contain the fires that, similar to last year's fires on Kangaroo Island (Karta pittingga), have torn through and burned down around half of Fraser Island (K'gari), the world's largest sand island, and significant consequences for its unique ecosystem are anticipated.

There are sources such as the Payday Report that

claim over 1,100 wildcat strikes have taken place across the United States since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.³ However, it only takes a quick glance at this interactive map to see that a large amount of these so-called 'strikes' were actually bosses closing the workplace for one reason or another (many in support of BLM protests, which were mislabelled as a 'general strike' in Seattle), while others were peaceful workplace protests and vigils during break time.⁴ Even so, there have been genuine workplace struggles both inside the unions and outside of them. The pandemic has simply brought about new health and safety concerns that add to pre-existing issues such as wage stagnation and decline, poor working conditions, and automation that workers across various industries have been expressing increasing dissatisfaction with over the past few years. After decades of class retreat, it was estimated by the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics that the number of workers involved in major work stoppages (strikes of more than 1,000 workers) skyrocketed from 25,000 in 2017 to nearly 500,000 in 2018. This was the largest number of people who have walked off the job since the mid 1980s. In 2019, the surge in strike activity continued and over 420 thousand workers were involved in major work stoppages.⁵ This rise in activity and demand for safer conditions and higher pay is not something that has been restricted to the United States, it has been present on some level throughout the world.

It is now the season where many people are setting goals (resolutions) to mark the change of year. The aim may be to quit smoking or drinking, to eat healthier and get fitter, to save money, or to spend more time with family and friends – because "new year, new me" – but the sad reality is that most will have abandoned these goals by the end of January and even fewer will end up accomplishing them. This is not because people do not care about their loved ones, their health, or saving for something big or important to them. It is because no real change comes with this annual change of date and the

same daily stresses, alienated wage-labour and lack of time and finances due to capitalism will persist – and this time around we have a global pandemic in the mix.

The 'holiday season'

In capitalist society, human needs are not decided on before commodities are made and profits are the driving force behind production. Instead, needs are manufactured by what has already been produced then being shoved down our throats through advertisements on everything from billboards, catalogues in the mail and TV commercials to product placement, social media, and on almost every corner of the internet. We have all seen some form of advertising for some rubbish product that, deep down, we know we do not need (or soon figure this out to be the case) but end up wasting our money on anyway.

While the wealth of billionaires has increased this year, for the working class this has meant unemployment, cuts to pay and furloughs, increased exploitation, and a decline in working conditions. In the instance of Jeff Bezos, founder and 11 percent stockholder of Amazon and the richest person in the world, his fortune has grown from \$113 billion USD at the start of the year to \$185.2 billion USD at the end of it. This is due to the fact that hundreds of millions of people have been trapped at home throughout the year and have turned to Amazon for food and entertainment. This has not only weighed heavily on Amazon workers themselves but also on postal workers who have commonly been working 12 to 14 hour days in poor understaffed conditions and have now also seen a 40 percent increase in packages compared to this time last year, after what has already been an extremely busy 9 months for them.⁶ The wealth of Elon Musk, CEO and 20 percent stockholder of Tesla, increased six-fold from \$25 billion USD in March to \$153 billion USD in December – going from 35th on the Billionaires list to knocking Bill Gates out of the number 2 spot.⁷ This came as a result of Tesla shares rising almost sevenfold since

March due to investors putting their money on the company playing a major part in paving the way to capitals' idea of a cleaner electric future.

Meanwhile, Amazon workers coordinated strikes, work stoppages and protests internationally for the retail 'holiday' of Black Friday in Bangladesh, India, Australia, Germany, Poland, Spain, France, the U.K, and the U.S. just to name a few, in their continued fight for higher pay and an improvement to their deplorable conditions.⁸ Unfortunately, these actions seem to have remained confined to the influence of a coalition known as Make Amazon Pay, which is composed of international union federations and nonprofit liberal organisations such as Greenpeace, with 400 politicians from over 34 countries expressing their solidarity. Tesla Factory workers in Fremont, California have now been working 6-day 60-hour weeks since August. The COVID-19 skeptic Musk has of course shown no consideration for the health and safety of workers, he questioned the lethality of the virus after health authorities ordered the closure of the Fremont factory in March and then reopened the doors in May. But outside of a few small protests, there has not been any clear pushback against these conditions.⁹

The 'holiday season' is the most wasteful time of year and it is said that the United Kingdom, United States and Australia all produce up to 50 percent more waste than usual.¹⁰ By the end of January, hundreds of thousands of tonnes of Christmas trees, plastic packaging, plastic cups and straws, wrapping paper, decorations, and food end up in landfill each year. Due to alienated social norms, we tend to believe that it is rude not to buy people a gift, to ask what others may want, or to express anything besides appreciation for what others were conned into buying for us. It is estimated that in 2018, \$400 million was spent on 10 million unwanted Christmas gifts in Australia – many of which ended up in landfill.¹¹ Although we support minimising how much waste we produce and reusing what we can, individualist actions will

never be able to put an end to the waste that is produced by capital and it has been proven that a lot of 'recycling' ends up at the dump anyway.

¹²

While all this waste is being produced, there are others who are going hungry all around the world and half of all children who die before the age of five do so because of malnutrition.¹³ Prior to the pandemic, 2 billion people lacked adequate access to safe and nutritious food. The problem has now only worsened. In the United States, surveys have shown that in November less than half of all households with children felt confident about having the food needed over the following month, 5.6 million households had struggled to put enough food on the table over the past week and hunger rates are three times higher than in 2019. Overall, food insecurity has at least doubled since last year due to pay cuts and rising unemployment rates.¹⁴ The situation is no better in the United Kingdom, where tens of thousands have been turning to food banks for the first time ever.¹⁵ In Australia, those who were already food insecure prior to the pandemic are now going hungry even more frequently. The number of people seeking food relief at least once a week from charities has more than doubled over the past year.¹⁶ Over two million people receiving Centrelink payments are set to have their incomes cut by \$100 a fortnight on New Year's Day, this follows a \$300 pay cut in September, and another \$150 to come in March, from this we can only expect these numbers to continue rising.

This time of year exacerbates the loneliness that many of us feel on a frequent basis. This is especially the case for those who have lost loved ones, need to work, do not have the money or documentation to travel, or have been separated from others by the state. In Australia, most prisons forbid visitors on Christmas Day and imprisoned workers are lucky if they get to make a ten-minute phone call. This feels like an additional punishment to both themselves and anyone they have on the outside, and it makes

the reality of their situation hit much harder than it usually does. The circumstances are much the same for workers around the world who have been thrown into immigration camps, cages, or hotels turned prisons, and who have no idea when they will see their loved ones again. This year, the presence of strict border closures, lockdowns and self-isolation have kept even more people apart. In the instance of many health and medical workers, spending this time of year away from their families is a mere continuation of their year-long isolation measures outside of work to try and limit the spread of COVID-19 – with some hiring hotel rooms or sleeping in their cars or camper vans and others whose families have been living elsewhere instead.¹⁷

The combination of isolation and their overall working conditions – issues such as inadequate staffing, low wages, lack of PPE, constant death everyday rather than treating people and sending most of them home, physical assaults and verbal assaults (which are often racist and/or sexist in nature), etc. – have pushed many paramedics, hospital, aged care, personal support, and home care workers around the world to breaking point. They have not only been infected and dying from the virus at a higher rate, but these circumstances have also increased the instances of suicide, post-traumatic stress, and the number of health and medical workers who have quit or intend to do so in the next year. On top of still having to deal with increasing virus cases, it is at this time of year that hospitals find themselves slammed due to a significant increase in presentations to the emergency room for cardiac issues, mental distress and self-harm, traumatic injuries, road accidents, drug overdoses and alcohol related illnesses and injuries.¹⁸

An increase in depression, anxiety, video calling (constant exposure to our own image) and the need to ration food in some instances and stress eating in others has caused body image and eating disorder cases to skyrocket (this is something that also happens every year over the

summer), they have more than doubled among children and hotlines have reported that calls and web chats from people of all ages have increased by between 50 to 300 percent.¹⁹ The waiting lists for treating these disorders are often long and the prevalence of these issues has been one of the major players in the worsening of mental health, as well as eating disorders typically increasing the risks associated with being infected with COVID-19. The mixture of financial stress, heat and excessive alcohol consumption not only leads to an increase of hospitalisation, but are all also factors in the spike in domestic, family, and random acts of, violence at this time of year – which have also significantly increased throughout the pandemic. It is said that these rates double around Christmas and multiply by 9 around New Year's Day.²⁰

In conclusion

Since the early 1970s we have been struggling through capitalism's third global crisis of accumulation since the onset of the imperialist epoch of its development. Throughout the 19th century, such crises occurred approximately every 10 years. But the more capital accumulated the more the period between crises increased and the extent of the crisis needed to restore profitability grew even larger. By the turn of the 20th century the mass of accumulated capital had reached a point where strictly economic crises had ceased to be sufficient to restore profit rates. Devaluation of constant capital now had to take place on something as devastating as generalised war.²¹ While there has been no generalised war since that of the Second World War, it is wishful thinking to believe it will never happen again.²² Since 1945 there has been a series of regional imperialist proxy wars that have continuously been waged in a fight for the control of raw materials and key areas of the world. Although some of these wars have, and continue to, cause enormous destruction and suffering, they have not produced a general devaluation of capital. As a result,

capital continues to resort to direct attacks on the working class and further proxy wars to disadvantage the competition. All these factors, along with the increasing prevalence of trade wars and imperialist manoeuvres, show us that the threat of a third world war is forever on the horizon.

The accumulation of capital has always been accompanied by periodic crises that are intrinsic to the capitalist mode of production. The root cause is to be found in the inescapable tendency of the rate of profit on industrial/manufacturing capital investment to fall.²³ When this rate of profit is insufficient capitalism turns increasingly to financial speculation. Today we are still dominated by the elements that led to the 2007 financial crisis. It was the bursting of the speculative bubble that created this crisis for the main American credit institutions, it then came to engulf global financial markets. Its origins though were not in the financial sphere but in the real economy. Although there may at times be productivity increases, upswings and downswings, the profitability of investments in the United States, and all the most advanced capitalist sectors, has been declining for decades.

²⁴

Capitalism is not a form of government, but a mode of production based on the exploitation of the working many by the capitalist few. It will not simply collapse or peacefully transform into communism. The property-owning classes have never given up their property without a bitter fight. No significant change can take place without the working class consciously overthrowing the present state of things, through its own organisations, and starting to build a new society. The alternative is a continuation of war, plunder and destruction, the end result being our extinction under capitalist barbarism.²⁵

We cannot say for sure what holidays or traditions will, or will not, exist in a post-capitalist society nor what they will look like if they do. But we do know that the world we aim to create will

not rely on so-called special occasions for people to be able to relax and spend time with those they love and care about. The existence of oppressive religious and cultural norms will have ceased. There will be no commodities, no environmentally destructive waste, and no money or unwanted presents to buy. There will be no wars, prisons or borders to keep people apart. In a world where production is based on human and environmental needs, rather than on profit, we will be able to better handle any outbreaks of disease and the impact of unavoidable natural disasters.

Over the 2020-2021 summer/winter, we extend our solidarity to all other workers around the world and urge for them to take any measures that they can to keep themselves and others safe. We encourage regifting and handing on any unwanted presents and leftover food to those who are on the streets or are otherwise struggling to make ends meet – rather than throwing things out. All of the food that you will not eat before it expires? Someone else will. The dressing gown and slippers (some of the most disposed of presents) you don't want? They could help keep another person warm at night. We also encourage checking in on friends, family, and co-workers, both now and whenever possible throughout the following year. Many of us are suffering financially, mentally, and medically on a level we never have before, and this weight is even heavier when we try to carry it alone. It is through building ties with other workers and recognising that the real 'all in this together' is our common, but varied, struggle that we can not only help better combat any daily feelings of alienation, helplessness, and loneliness, but can also work towards the revolutionary overthrow of the present state of things.

We look forward to hearing from all like-minded internationalists reading this who wish to get involved with our activity in the new year.

EK, Internationalist Communists Oceania (ICO)

Notes

1 COVID-19 Map

<https://news.google.com/covid19/map?hl=en-AU&gl=AU&ceid=AU%3Aen>

2 Yemen: Disease, COVID and War

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/nov/27/yemen-disease-covid-war>

3 COVID-19 Strike Wave Interactive Map

<https://paydayreport.com/covid-19-strike-wave-interactive-map/>

4 Many Seattle Restaurants Will Close for the BLM General Strike

<https://www.thestranger.com/things-to-do/2020/06/09/43878321/many-seattle-restaurants-will-close-on-friday-for-the-black-lives-matter-general-strike>

5 Continued Surge in Strike Activity

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6 Postal Workers in the United States

<https://labornotes.org/2020/12/its-been-long-nightmare-christmas-ups-and-postal-workers>

7 Ten Billionaires Reap 400 Billion Boost to Wealth <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/dec/19/ten-billionaires-reap-400bn-boost-to-wealth-during-pandemic>

8 Amazon Workers' Union International Strike

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9 Elon Musk, Tesla Pushing Factory Workers to the Brink as Profits Soar

<https://observer.com/2020/10/elon-musk-tesla-pushing-factory-workers-to-the-brink-as-profits-soar/>

10 UK Christmas Waste

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11 Christmas Waste 2018

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12 Plastic recycling

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2017/07/plastic-produced-recycling-waste-ocean-trash-debris-environment/>

[#:~:text=Of%20that%2C%20only%20nine%20percent,the%20oceans%2C%20the%20final%20sink.](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2017/07/plastic-produced-recycling-waste-ocean-trash-debris-environment/#:~:text=Of%20that%2C%20only%20nine%20percent,the%20oceans%2C%20the%20final%20sink.)

13 The pandemic has made hunger even more urgent to address <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-11-04/pandemic-has-made-hunger-even-more-urgent-address>

14 United States Hunger 2020

<https://www.theguardian.com/food/2020/nov/25/us-hunger-surges-spiraling-pandemic>

15 UK Food Bank Demand 2020

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/food-banks-uk-demand-coronavirus-covid-trussell-trust-latest-figures-b433921.html>

16 Food Insecurity Australia 2020

<https://www.foodbank.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/FB-HR20.pdf>

17 How Healthcare Workers Avoid Bringing COVID-19 Home

<https://www.wired.com/story/coronavirus-covid-19-health-care-workers-families/>

18 The Most Common Hospital Presentations Over Christmas

<https://www.ausmed.com/cpd/articles/most-common-hospital-presentations-over-christmas>

19 Requests for Eating Disorder Support Triple

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-10/requests-for-eating-disorder-support-triple/12636818>
20 DV Christmas and New Year
<https://7news.com.au/politics/law-and-order/domestic-violence-incidents-increase-nine-times-on-new-years-eve-double-around-christmas-c-599783>
21 The Economic Role of War in Capitalism's Decadent Phase
<https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2005-11-01/the-economic-role-of-war-in-capitalism-s-decadent-phase>
22 The Drums of War in the Gulf
<http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2019-07-23/the-drums-of-war-in-the-gulf>
23 The Current Crisis and the Tasks of the Communists by CWO
<http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-02-07/the-current-crisis-and-the-tasks-of-communists>
24 A Decade Since the Financial Crash by Fabio Damen
<http://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2019-01-22/a-decade-since-the-financial-crash>
25 The Economic Role of War in Capitalism's Decadent Phase <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2005-11-01/the-economic-role-of-war-in-capitalism-s-decadent-phase>

After You Could Your Marriage!



happiness depends on the real you ...
never doubting your intimate feminine
Don't risk becoming another you!

ine daintiness
with "Lysol"!
pinal canal even
us matter. No
solution in the simple directions on every
bottle. Many doctors advise patients to
douche regularly with "Lysol," just to
insure daintiness alone, and to use it as



HOW I LOST MY HUSBAND

I guess I was really to blame when Stan started paying attention to other women. It wasn't that I didn't know about feminine hygiene. I had become ... well ... forgetful. Yes, I found out

the hard way that "now-and-then" cure isn't enough! My doctor finally set me right. "Never be a careless wife," he said. He advised Lysol disinfectant for douching *always*.



AND WON HIM BACK AGAIN!

She was a "Perfect Wife"
... except for ONE NEGLECT*



"Lysol" might have made her score 100%

not logical, there's the pity.
probably know at least one
bo seems to "have everything"
love of her husband.

be too sure he's just ungrate-
shape she's guilty of the one
husband can stand. A neglect,
or may kill a man's love, even
anything else is perfect.

ve in any doubt about femi-
ence—ask your doctor about
Probably no other product is
known and used by women
purpose. Here are some of the
sly "Lysol" is preferred ...

- 1—Non-Caustic ... "Lysol" in the proper dilution, is gentle and efficient, contains no harmful free caustic alkali.
- 2—Effectiveness ... "Lysol" is a powerful germicide, active in the presence of organic matter (such as dirt, mucus, serum, etc.).
- 3—Spreading ... "Lysol" solutions spread because of low surface tension, and thus virtually reach out more.



- 4—Economy ... "Lysol" is used only about one cent in the proper dilution for feminine hygiene.
- 5—Order ... The cleanly odorless appearance after use.
- 6—Stability ... "Lysol" keeps its strength no matter how long it is kept in unopened bottles.

Also, my Lysol Hygienic Soap and complexion. It's clean

What Every Woman Should Know
SEND COUPON FOR "LYSOL"
Lysol & Lysol Products Corp.
Dept. H-100, New York, N.Y.
Send me free booklet "Lysol"
which tells the many uses of
Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Malignant ulcers of capitalism: The proletarian struggle for reproductive freedom (Part 1)

In this first piece on reproductive struggles in class society we bring to focus some of the facts and dangers surrounding abortion, as well as the family unit and prostitution, two phenomena that Marxists deem to be flipsides of the same coin, and inseparable from the struggle for reproductive freedom. In the following installments of this series we shall make mention of sterilization, the impact that the climate crisis has on us having children, sexual violence in times of imperialist conflict, religion and reproduction, and shed light on bourgeois laws as specific to the needs of capital, noting the consequential damages to the proletariat. Included in our sections on bourgeois laws and religion will be sex-selective abortions, China's one (now two) child policy, Muslim-majority

countries such as Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran, and Catholic dominated regions such as Latin American countries and Poland – where we have seen another assault on reproductive rights just last month, which again was met with massive protest (although politically chained to the liberal opposition). The article linked here sheds some light on these protests in the meanwhile.¹

Even today proletarian women are often denied the same freedom to control their own bodies as their less financially challenged 'sisters'.² Sex education is still woefully erratic, as is access to safe and effective contraception. While legal, accessible, affordable abortion is just not a practical option for those who are left to seek out a clandestine ("back-alley") abortion or are

forced to carry the pregnancy to term. These women, many of whom are single or lacking in adequate support networks, are forced to have children without the necessary money or time, as both are monopolized by wage-labor. A large number decide that it would be in their best interest to have an abortion due to this absence of needed resources or the desire to raise a child. When forced into situations of restricted access, many proletarian women give birth to babies who then grow up in environments which lack the necessities required for child-rearing.

Abortion and contraception facts and dangers

Women of the bourgeois class have long had their own private physicians and ability to pay for safe clandestine abortions. On top of this is their adequate access to birth control – leaving abortion for them as purely a backup option. Meanwhile, “back-alley” abortions, sought by working-class women around the world, used to see the most notable tactic be the use of wire coat hangers – Clorox, knitting needles, Coke bottles, and sticks were also often used.³

Today in countries with legalized abortion, the pill RU486 – actually comprised of two pills, known medically as mifepristone and misoprostol – is commonly prescribed for abortions up until 9 weeks gestation.⁴ After 9 weeks, the procedure of surgical abortion at a specialist clinic or hospital is required.⁵ When performed by qualified health and medical professionals in hygienic conditions, abortion is one of the safest medical procedures and complications are relatively rare.

Meanwhile in many countries where abortion remains banned or heavily restricted, misoprostol pills are often legally sold in pharmacies for the treatment of ulcers and subsequently sought out by pregnant workers.⁶ Although much safer than older methods of back-alley abortion, using misoprostol comes with a significantly increased risk of experiencing potential health

complications, when taken on its own, rather than in combination with mifepristone.⁷

The risk of complications also increases the further into the pregnancy that an abortion is needed. These risks include infection or damage of the womb, pregnancy remnants in the womb (incomplete abortion), continuation of the pregnancy, excessive bleeding, and a damaged cervix.⁸ When safely performed, abortion does not affect your chances of having normal pregnancies in the future. But repeated abortions have been associated with an increased risk of premature birth and potential risks to your fertility and future pregnancies if womb infection develops and is not treated promptly. Many people are able to get pregnant immediately after the procedure, so it is necessary to start using contraception right away.

The only contraception that largely protects against pregnancy, disease and infection comes in the form of the condom. While other temporary measures include: natural calendar based methods, spermicide, birth control pills, intrauterine devices (IUDs), contraceptive implants (Nexplanon), hormonal patches, and injections. More permanent forms of contraception include: tubal ligations, hysterectomies, and vasectomies. All of these forms of contraception help prevent pregnancy, come with their own benefits and risk factors, and have varying levels of efficiency.⁹ For example, birth control pills can reduce the risks of some cancers and pelvic inflammatory disease, but come with an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases. IUDs are highly effective in preventing pregnancy, but they come with a risk of infection that other contraceptives do not. Some forms of birth control can also have a negative effect on an individual’s mood, weight, libido, or cause physical pain or irritation. In regards to male contraceptive measures, beyond condoms and vasectomies, much more still needs to be done to see such a thing be commonplace and readily accessible.

While the majority of people who seek to

terminate their pregnancy are straight cisgender women – lesbian, bisexual, and transgender workers are also heavily impacted by whether adequate contraception and safe abortion are accessible. Increased risk of sexual assault and attempts to combat bullying in school or otherwise conceal their sexual or gender identity can lead to adolescent sexual and gender minorities who are capable of pregnancy, falling pregnant at a much higher rate than their straight cisgender counterparts. Due to this, they are said to be at least twice as likely to seek out an abortion.¹⁰

The bourgeois family unit, domestic violence, and prostitution

As Marx wrote in *The German Ideology*, “The first division of labor is that between man and woman for the propagation of children”.¹¹ The development of monogamous marriage created the first form of the family, one based on economic conditions and the preservation of private property. Engels added on to Marx’s prior statement that “The first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male.”. This in no way implies that women and men comprise two separate classes. It simply means that the oppression of the female sex arose with that of class oppression. The husband has a position of supremacy over his wife within the bourgeois family unit; in the heyday of industrial capitalism he was the one expected to support the family through his wages, placing him in a position of financial dominance – giving him the power to make financial decisions for the family, or cut off support at his will. Despite the fact that many women were employed, especially in factories and mills, the standard picture was that women, especially married women, should manage the household. By carrying out their family duties, the proletarian woman is excluded from social production and falls financially dependent on her

husband. Thus, the bourgeois family unit provides a basis for the oppression of the proletarian woman.

Male supremacy within the household was and is protected by law. Within the proletarian family, the introduction of women into the labor market allowed them to become the head wage-laborer of the household. In such cases, it would appear there is no economic basis for male supremacy within the family. However, that is not to say that such supremacy fails to exist, either in legal terms or in terms of social norms. The integration of women into the workforce created a dual-dependency; in addition to their financial dependence on their husbands, women were now exploited through the commodification of their labor-power.¹²

Part of the reason for this is that women comprise a cheap labor force and still today are paid less than men for the same amount and quality of work.¹³ In addition, many proletarian women spend less time than their male counterparts wage-laboring and continue to take up the non-waged domestic labor of the household.¹⁴ Women are here seen as still somewhat excluded from social production, rendering them unable to truly gain economic independence.

Carrying a pregnancy to term largely confines the proletarian woman to the non-waged labor of child-rearing. The time which she spends taking care of her children and running the household is time taken away from selling her labor-power. Thus, she is subordinated to her husband due to his economic supremacy over her, which reinforces the male supremacy within the family. Although proletarian women cannot be emancipated without the abolition of class society, women’s entry into social production was a necessary precondition for this abolition.

Proletarian women are often forced to stay in relationships against their wishes due to unwanted pregnancies and inaccessibility of abortions. This is especially dangerous for them

and their children in cases of domestic violence: violence which is often not recognized as such, but on the contrary, regarded as a right to inflict it. Marital rape, for instance, only became fully criminalized in England in 2003.¹⁵ Even today, countries such as China, Syria, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Bangladesh, and Algeria, still do not fully recognize rape within marriage to be a criminal offense. Another example is Russia, where “non-aggravated” battery was decriminalized in 2017 – an action which has led to a rise in domestic violence, as well as a decrease in the number of cases reported. It has left victims less inclined to try and leave or seek any form of help since their experiences are now largely deemed acceptable in the eyes of the law. In many instances where they do reach out for help, the police do nothing, leaving the victims vulnerable to retaliation for speaking out or trying to escape.¹⁶ Here, we could go as far as saying that the cycle of violence is the *raison d’être* of the bourgeois family unit.

Domestic violence reinforces the victim’s economic dependence on the aggressor, which prevents many women from leaving – especially if there are children involved. Confined to the duties of the household and child-rearing, women cannot escape violent relationships without the necessary economic independence that would free them from the control of their husbands. The aggressor may even prevent his partner from working or keep her isolated to make sure she remains financially dependent on him.¹⁷ Even in cases where the victim is employed, the aggressor may force her to give up her earnings, or even steal her paychecks without her knowledge. Thus, she is forced to stay and remain at his mercy.

Research has shown that women who experience unintended pregnancies are often at greater risk of domestic violence. A New Zealand study indicated that 13.4% of women who had an unintended pregnancy experienced physical violence from their partners within the next 6 years, compared to 5.4% who experienced

physical violence after having intended pregnancies.¹⁸ This could be due to the fact that unintended pregnancies cause additional strain on relationships and the financial and emotional stresses involved in child-rearing could potentially exacerbate abusive behaviors.

Reproductive coercion and control is a form of sexual violence that is prevalent among victims of domestic violence. It includes sabotaging contraceptive methods, coercing a partner to have unprotected sex, and attempting to or succeeding in impregnating a partner against their will.¹⁹ According to an Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) survey of domestic violence victims in the US, four in ten women reported that a partner had forced them to stop using birth control or attempted to impregnate them against their will. 84% became pregnant. Another cross-sectional study investigating young women in Northern California found that out of the 53% of participants who reported intimate partner violence, 19% experienced pregnancy coercion, 15% experienced birth control sabotage, and 35% experienced reproductive control from their partners. Pregnancy coercion and birth control sabotage were both found to be associated with unintended pregnancy.²⁰

It is evident that reproductive coercion and control limits the victim’s ability to retain a job or education, since full-time child-rearing creates barriers to working or studying. The majority of the victims in the IWPR study reported experiencing financial abuse from their partners; 2/3 of the survivors indicated that intimate partner violence had hindered their educational and job opportunities, and 83% reported that their partners had disrupted their ability to work. Reproductive coercion and control strengthens the bourgeois family unit by establishing a dynamic in which the victim becomes financially dependent on the aggressor, unable to leave because of a lack of economic freedom.

One of the most concerning things about everything we have mentioned above is that so

many people still do not even understand what domestic violence is. In Australia, for example, recent studies have shown that, within the 18-34 age range, more than 4 in 10 men did not consider punching, hitting, or restraining a partner to be domestic violence. Almost half did not believe that controlling finances and forcing one's partner into economic dependency are acts of domestic violence. These numbers do not even indicate how many must still not recognize psychological abuse and verbal degradation to also be forms of intimate partner violence. Emotional abuse, usually in the form of manipulation and gaslighting – a method of psychological control which involves breaking down an individual's mental state over a prolonged period of time, causing them to doubt their thoughts, experiences, and even their own sanity – can often be a precursor to physical violence; often, they go hand in hand. Interestingly, it was reported that people across all genders from the older generations were more inclined to recognize domestic violence.²¹

Although domestic violence victims are disproportionately female and this article focuses mainly on this factor, as proletarians see our living conditions increasingly decline, more and more working men, in both straight and gay relationships, are also finding themselves either trapped in a toxic or violent home environment, that they would rather leave, or left out on the streets at further risk of COVID and other dangers.²² The COVID-19 pandemic, and its subsequent lockdowns, lay-offs, and income decreases, has only exacerbated what were already high domestic violence rates around the world. It has also further impaired the ability for working-class victims of any gender to be able to leave. This is a subject that comrades in CWO and Klasbatalo wrote on earlier this year and one that we are also currently writing about, separate from this series of articles, in order to give an updated view of the situation before and during the pandemic.²³

Although the brunt of childcare and the

consequences of unintended pregnancies fall primarily on the mother, fathers are also affected by restrictive abortion laws. Proletarian men who are loving and caring partners may have to work greater hours, increasing their dependence on capital as they struggle to support their families. Since the majority of their time is occupied by wage-labor, they may grow distant from their families and become unable to develop proper relationships with their children. Regardless of devotion to their families and partners, an unintentional pregnancy in conjunction with economic burden can hinder relationships, since marriages beginning after an unintended conception have a greater chance of failure.²⁴ If it ends in divorce, the now-single mother is likely to have a more difficult time balancing both domestic and wage-labor in order to provide for her child on her own.

Capital acquires its needs through the law, with restrictions on reproductive freedom reinforcing working women's subjugation within the household through a division that only strengthens the bourgeois class.

Within the shadows of the bourgeois family unit, prostitution (sex work) thrives, with capital forcing millions of proletarians to resort to selling sexual access to their bodies for the sake of survival. Many others see themselves forced or trapped in the industry in the form of being trafficked: manipulation, threats, physical violence, and withholding of pay or legal documentation (such as passports), these are just a few ways in which this extra level of force can manifest. Although prostitution predates capitalism, it does not predate class society. In the ancient and medieval world prostitutes served as the legal complement to exclusive familial relationships and were tolerated by society.²⁵ With the rise of capitalism, more toiling women were thrust into this form of labor, a direct result of both the exploitation of labor by capital in and of itself and women's barriers to the legal labor force. Bourgeois society simultaneously encourages prostitution while punishing and shaming prostitutes.

Alexandra Kollontai described prostitution as a social phenomenon necessarily tied to the economic dependence women face in marriage. She stated that the woman sells herself legally to her husband; rendering her confined to the household, and financially dependent on her husband. The wife and the prostitute both have an economic dependence on men; be it inside or outside of legal marriage, each resort to selling themselves for survival. Thus, prostitution could be considered the flipside of bourgeois marriage. This is depicted clearly in the cycle of violence; the proletarian woman who relies on the aggressor's wages to survive is confined to the bourgeois family unit. In order to escape his violence, she resorts to prostitution to provide for her and her children.

Prostitution is a form of wage-labor which particularly impedes on reproductive freedom. Reproduction on one's own terms becomes impossible when it is coerced through wage-laboring. For instance, unwanted pregnancies as a result of prostitution often result in the sex worker only becoming further trapped in the industry. As Kollontai wrote, "When a woman's wages are insufficient to keep her alive, the sale of favors seems a possible subsidiary occupation.". Unable to access reproductive care, women who have unintended pregnancies can fall into poverty without having the resources to raise a child – especially if they are already at a financial disadvantage. The proletarian woman's dependence on capital puts her in a position in which she partakes in prostitution to provide for her child. This cycle is perpetuated by the nature of prostitution and limited access to contraceptives – sex workers who have children as a result of their occupation are then forced to remain in prostitution in order to care for their children.

This is the case in many countries in which abortion is illegal or inaccessible to the majority of proletarian women. In Uganda, the penal code allows for abortion in instances where the

pregnancy is a threat to the pregnant person's life, physical, or mental health. However, the laws are vague enough that it is unclear under which circumstances abortion is legally permitted, resulting in many medical providers refusing to perform abortions at all in order to avoid legal consequences.²⁶ Despite the restrictive laws, 314,500 women in Uganda had abortions in 2013, many of whom were sex workers. Contributing factors to low contraceptive use in Uganda and other countries across Africa include: poverty, cultural values, spousal violence and a lack of support, health and sexual education services.²⁷ This helps fuel unintended pregnancies which in turn increases the rate of maternal and infant mortality. This is due to proletarian women delivering their babies with unskilled or low skilled assistance.

Many sex workers living in Uganda have unintended pregnancies due to the lack of knowledge and accessibility surrounding contraceptives and sex education – along with men typically not wanting to use condoms. Some accounts tell of sex workers being unaware of abortion medications and instead, nearly dying from the use of washing detergent and tea leaves as alternative abortion methods. Other accounts tell of workers who were raped by clients, attempting to have an abortion by ingesting local herbs or taking homeopathic medications – all of which were unsuccessful, forcing them to give birth against their wishes. Much like criminalizing prostitution does nothing to help those who have no other options nor those who are forced into the industry against their will, criminalizing abortion does not stop abortions from happening – it simply makes the procedures more dangerous and, in many cases, fatal.

Similar to Uganda's penal code, abortion is illegal in Brazil except in cases of rape, fetal abnormality, or if the mother's life is at risk.²⁸ Despite these laws, one in five women by the age of 40 reported that they have had at least one abortion. In 2015 a study among sex workers in Brazil showed that more than half of those

surveyed had obtained at least one abortion in their lifetimes; the most common method used was misoprostol. Those who used more invasive methods of abortion, such as needles and uterine probes, faced greater medical complications such as hemorrhage and infection. Although the majority of sex workers who used misoprostol went to the hospital to confirm the completion of the procedure, most refrained from disclosing the abortion to medical professionals – likely to avoid punishment or legal consequences. Furthermore, many sex workers who induced abortions themselves received misoprostol from illegal drug distributors, which included counterfeit pills that took larger amounts to ensure that the abortion would be successful.

In studies conducted across Iran²⁹; Russia³⁰; Colombia³¹; and Zambia³²; it was found that a large amount of sex workers reported to having at least one abortion in their lifetimes, many of which were induced. In most of these countries, little to no contraceptive methods were used. These results indicate that a restriction of legal access to abortions has little to no impact in stopping women from seeking them. However, it is clear these that laws target working-class women, who are then forced to resort to dangerous, and even potentially lethal methods to perform these abortions themselves, often seeking little to no medical care to avoid any legal repercussions.³³

In countries such as the United Kingdom, where a fifth of the population now fall below the poverty line, there has been an increase in “survival sex”, particularly among workers at risk of homelessness.³⁴ The housing crisis in the UK has prompted the rise of “sex for rent” situations, in which landlords prey on the vulnerable by offering a room in exchange for sex.³⁵ Often, those who refuse to partake in this are punished; in some cases, landlords proposition sex to struggling tenants as an alternative method of payment, to which the tenant may be evicted if they refuse. With capitalism inherently necessitating the exploitation of most of the

human race, it is not simply a matter of having a broken system as bourgeois reformists claim. The capitalist system has come full circle and resulted in more and more unemployed and precariously employed proletarians being coerced into providing sexual access to their bodies in exchange for food and shelter.

This article contains a lot of information that we wrote before the current COVID-19 pandemic hit and only worsened conditions. With lockdowns and other restrictions coming and going, many sex workers have seen themselves face the same sorts of struggle as all other workers. They have either been put out of work due to the health risks of the pandemic and legal repercussions of breaking lockdown or they have had to continue working under these extremely risky conditions. Laws and restrictions on prostitution in Canada have resulted in many sex workers unable to even access government assistance.³⁶

As Engels wrote, the abolition of the family is necessary for the abolition of prostitution, as both are rooted in private property and the dependence of women on men.³⁷ This can only be done through the abolition of class society, through an international proletarian revolution. Upon the realization of a world which has abolished all the components of class society and meets everyone’s needs, there will be no channel for the commodification of women’s or anyone else’s bodies to exist. Children will no longer be brought into the world through prostitution. Women who wish to have children will be able to do so without being confined to the household. Children will be raised communally, the brunt of the labor no longer falling on the mother. People would no longer be forced to partake in unwanted sexual acts in order to survive, nor could they prey on others in that situation, and instead would be able to enjoy consensual sex for mutual pleasure. Only upon this abolition taking place will there be true reproductive freedom and the liberation of all of humanity.

EL (IWG) & EK (ICO)

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Left nationalism and support for imperialist war in the United States

A large part of the legacy that hangs on the modern left is left nationalism, the idea that there is a good nationalism that is progressive and fights against the great imperialist powers for a supposed national self-determination. With the epoch of imperialism, nationalism transformed into a thoroughly reactionary political force reflective of great power rivalries. It has also bolstered the attempts at industrial development of local factions of the bourgeoisie that dwell on the periphery of the tectonic plates of imperialist power. Nationalism is the appeal of the left for national liberation and it is also the call to fight against national liberation. It is what leftists have used to mobilize the working class into support for imperialist war. It festers with the perception of wounded national pride. Whether it is a German government invading Poland to stop "Polish aggression" or the United States government calling for the overthrow of seven

governments in five years in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, nationalism is always antithetical to communism.

To understand nationalism as a political force one must grasp a basic marxist understanding of the state as the product of irreconcilable class antagonisms, as "bodies of armed men". Nationalism never includes the working class save as cannon fodder, as labor units to be mobilized in support of any particular faction of the bourgeoisie. For left nationalists the working class is a spectator. It is particularly pernicious a form of nationalism in that it seeks to control the working class and to disrupt any class resistance to imperialist war. It hides behind a humanitarian guise but its' purpose is to move the boundaries between imperialist powers.

At one point in the war in Syria, proxy armies

funded by the Pentagon fought proxy armies funded by the CIA. Most leftist organizations took sides. For every organization that was "pro-Assad" there was another leftist organization that was waging a struggle on behalf of the invading imperialist powers. A leftist, who would never support an obscurantist theocracy or nationalist regime at home can support all manner of political reaction when it comes to their support for imperialist war abroad. There is no thought that every imperialist conflict on the periphery of capitalist power brings nuclear armed powers closer to war with each other, that each one brings with it the increased possibility of a confrontation between the powers of the imperialist metropolises.

The last two decades have seen the aggressive reassertion of US imperialist power all over the world. There is no shortage of "Polish aggression" for American imperialism to initiate one slaughter after another. Few leftists in the US have any clue of how many people have died in these US armed and supported conflicts. The subject is one of discomfort. American leftists have the same exceptionalism that whispers to them that if no US citizens are dying then the conflict doesn't matter.

America is back?

Whether it was Reagan's mixed metaphor claiming that America was "standing tall in the saddle again", or Biden saying that "America is back" the meaning is the same. It is a promise to carry out more wars and aggression. Like the last slogan out of the White House, "Make America Great Again", it shows a section of the capitalist class that is keenly aware of its own decline as a capitalist power. The capitalist class in the US sees its interests increasingly frustrated by rival capitalist interests and is thus inclined towards greater levels of military brinkmanship. Driven by a crisis that has its roots in the process of capitalist accumulation, their actions become more desperate and more dangerous.

The lefts that have joined the Democratic Party in the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), just as those leftists who stand around the Democratic Party, take up support for imperialist proxy wars play a key role in giving imperialism a mantle of freedom. Yet there are few forces more oppressive, racist, or religious obscurantist than imperialist war. Where capital tears down all boundaries, it imposes them around the working class. The refined nationalism of the left contributes to the legitimization of imperialist war. The left forever follows in the footsteps of the old social democracy in its support for humanitarian wars so that nations can self-determine themselves into their preferred imperialist bloc.

Counterposed to this is internationalism and revolutionary defeatism. These forces took concrete form during the days of the Russian and German Revolutions and brought an end to the first world war. This is far more bound to the real historical experiences of workers than the idea that nationalist armies and religious obscurantist mercenaries are going to do anything that isn't completely hostile to the working class.

Over the years the Internationalist Workers Group has written frequently on the subject of nationalism but it bears repeating, nationalism is a force that is antagonistic to the interests of workers. It is the domination of capital in the guise of patriotism. Even when it appears that most workers have bought into a nice nationalist lie, the subsequent course of events can still shatter these illusions and cause workers to turn against the global imperialist order that spawns nationalism and war. In the end it must be an international working class, organized in its own party, with their own organizations of struggle that can put an end to the class rule of capitalism and imperialist war.

ASm



Against police reform: For the abolition of capitalism

Despite losing its initial fervor on a nationwide scale, protests continued in cities such as NYC, LA, Seattle, Portland, Atlanta, and Washington DC for several months after the murder of George Floyd. While the images and emotions felt from the original protests and uprisings throughout late May and early June 2020 may seem like a distant memory, the murders of working class black and brown people have continued. In the fall, there had been two significant developments in regards to this trend. In late September, the cops who killed Breonna Taylor in her apartment while she was asleep, were not charged with murder, resulting in a short uptick of protests in Louisville and other cities. In late October, Walter Wallace, a working class black man in Philadelphia, was shot at least ten times on the street by police. His death led to a spark of riots in Philadelphia and other cities, with the police coming out in open support of his murder. The mayor, Jim Kenney, condemned the riots, while simultaneously attempting to reassure the victims of police terror that he was on their side. Despite months of protests calling for police

abolition and accountability, little to nothing has been done to abate the intensity and frequency of police terror against the working class.

The initial protests were met with calls for electoralism, encouraging people to vote if they wanted the police and corrupt politicians to be held accountable. As expected, the calls to vote became even worse as we approached Election Day. Ever since Joe Biden won the presidential election, many Americans have been celebrating, convinced that the mass injustices and exploitation will cease to exist so long as Donald Trump is no longer president. Although the working class is still subject to the same conditions as they have always been, the results of the election have for the moment pushed many Americans into an attitude of complacency that defined the status quo during Obama's presidency.

We must not forget that Joe Biden ran a platform of "law and order" that included additional funding for the police as well increased

repression of so-called agitators and violent protesters. Biden's role in fueling mass incarceration and the war on drugs in the 90's, as well as Kamala Harris' record as a prosecutor, do not bode well for the working class. If we have learned anything from the years under the Obama administration and American election culture, it is likely that a Biden presidency will promote the continuation of the status quo. Only time will tell whether the American population will break out of its delusion and realize that the same injustices that have occurred under Trump will continue under Biden. Even then, it is likely that they will simply denounce Biden as another corrupt politician and encourage people to vote for a "better president" in 2024. This cycle continues every 4 years.

As communists, we recognize that electoralism is a dead end. Voting for the lesser evil or voting to defund the police will not put an end to police murders or state violence, especially when it aligns with the interests of the capitalist class. We must fight capitalism, not its symptoms. The working class in its current state of disorganization is too weak to effectively challenge state repression and the increasingly militarized police. It is our role as militants to intervene within the class struggle, for class consciousness and the self-organization of the working class. Only with an internationalist revolutionary party and organized proletariat do we stand a chance in liberating humanity from the exploitation and violence that plagues us.

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George Floyd protests

Marx once wrote that there are decades in which weeks happen, and days in which decades happen. In the days following May 26, it seemed as though we had been living through the latter scenario described by Marx, in which the anger and dissatisfaction felt by workers both in the United States and abroad, had coalesced into a

worldwide demonstration of decades-long frustrations. Scenes reminiscent of the unrest and riots which sprouted up in individual cities during the second half of the Obama administration, such as Ferguson in 2014, Baltimore in 2015, and Dallas in 2016, had spread to nearly every major city across the country, peaking in mid-June. Protests erupted in smaller cities in the US as well as cities abroad. Protests continue to this day, but have plateaued in most locations over the duration of the summer. Both sympathizers and members of the ICT, including the IWG in the US, the CWO in the UK, and Klasbatalo in Canada, have been actively intervening in protests throughout cities such as New York, Philadelphia, London, Montreal, Toronto, Los Angeles, Trenton, Richmond, and Adelaide.

These riots were initially sparked by the ruthless murder of George Floyd by racist police officers in Minneapolis. His death may have been a catalyst for the protests, but it became clear rather quickly that the protests addressed much deeper issues. Rather, George Floyd was one of thousands of black people killed by the police in recent years (though the tradition goes back much farther). In response to this, working class people of all races have risen up in solidarity with black workers to protest against decades of police brutality and state-sanctioned violence.

The fact that the uprising is multiracial and has garnered such an intense working class response is due to the fact that the issues delve deeper than just police violence against black people. Increasing numbers of working class whites understand not only that an attack on one section of the class is an attack on the class as a whole, but also the role that police have in capitalist society. That is, that police have a very clear social role which does not consist of protecting citizens or being keepers of public safety, but rather of being the armed thugs of the capitalist class. Their task is to protect property and safeguard the interests of capital, which includes terrorizing those who conflict against its interests. While this fact is quite evident from how police

have responded to protests and demonstrations throughout the country, communists have long understood the role of police in upholding capitalism.

Police abolition and reform

Following the death of George Floyd, “abolish the police” became an increasingly popular slogan at anti-police protests across the country. Self-styled anti-capitalist leftists claim to oppose police reform, advocating for abolition instead. (As communists, we distinguish ourselves from leftists, as leftist refers to the left wing of capital). Mandatory implicit-bias training, de-escalation/crisis training, and requiring body cameras are some examples of reforms that have failed to curb acts of police violence or reduce the number of unarmed black people murdered by the police for non-violent offenses. Upon realizing the limitations of reform, activists have called to abolish the police force by disbanding it and replacing it with an alternative form of community policing. The words “abolition” and “reform” have been watered down to the point where the concepts are used interchangeably. The public understanding of what constitutes reform refers to minor policy changes, whereas disbanding the police and replacing it with another institution that goes by a different name, is seen as something “radical” that goes hand in hand with abolition – instead of as the basic reform package it really is.

The problem with the police abolitionist movement is not the idea of abolition, but the belief that such a structure can be abolished under capitalism. This belief requires the assumption that the police are an institution that can be separated from its capitalist roots and destroyed from within. Communists understand that the police simply exist as a tool of the bourgeoisie, to defend the interests of capital. Therefore, it will continue to exist for as long as capitalism needs it to function. Police abolition cannot be a separate goal, or something that can lead to “gradual development” of communism.

Only when capitalism is abolished will the police finally become obsolete.

History of Police

The modern police were invented within the early 19th century in England and later in the United States as a response to crowds, not crime. The police force was originally designed to control large, defiant crowds – specifically referring to workers’ strikes in England, riots in the Northern US, and the threat of slave insurrections in the South – within the time period of 1825 to 1855. This history of the police shows that it was never an institution that was created to protect its citizens, but rather one that had always relied on violence and intimidation tactics to suppress working class demonstrations and collective action.

The Industrial Revolution in England was a catalyst for class struggle – industrialization itself was a necessary step towards the creation of the proletariat, and as more workers protested for higher wages and better working conditions, the more they became a threat to the capitalist class. The French Revolution in 1789 led to the outlawing of trade unions and meetings of over 50 people in England – due to the British ruling class’ fear that English workers would be inspired by the French. English workers continued to organize in larger demonstrations from 1792 to 1820, although they were met with army opposition. The 1819 Peterloo Massacre in Manchester consisted of soldiers charging into a peaceful crowd of 80,000 people, killing 11 and injuring hundreds. Although the massacre was intended to control the crowd and suppress the demonstrations, it led to a rise in strikes and protests instead. The army could not continue executing strike leaders as the demonstrations grew, since it ran the risk of martyring the workers and inciting a more organized response. This led to the creation of the Metropolitan Police in London in 1829, which was intended to break up crowds through non-lethal violence – a form of police brutality that allowed them to intimidate

and control workers without warranting a collective response. The police were dispersed throughout London, policing the daily lives of the working class through neighborhood surveillance. The modern-day police force takes on this form.

Although the historical context to the development of the police force in places like New York and Charleston differed from that of London, the fact that these institutions were created to enforce crowd control and intimidate workers remains the same. It is important to recognize that policing of individuals through acts of violence to “enforce the law” extend beyond racial discrimination or simply a defense of private property. Whether it is an everyday, localized act of police brutality on an individual, or the larger scale riot police instigating violence by dispelling tear gas and rubber bullets at peaceful protesters, both are methods used to subdue the working class and defend the interests of the bourgeoisie. Because the police force exists only to fulfill this purpose, it will continue to exist in one form or another despite any attempts at “police abolition”, so long as we still live in a capitalist society.

Bourgeois politicians and reform

Most people are able to recognize and see through the cynical and hypocritical efforts by companies such as Wawa when they display “Black Lives Matter” in the same stores where they employ black workers making sandwiches for less than a living wage, or when Nike runs a lazy ad telling people to not be racist and to oppose oppression while simultaneously profiting from prison labor in China. However, even for many of the same people who are vocal against police terror and systemic racism, it is easy to fall for propaganda in the form of nice gestures made by bourgeois politicians. Although we know as communists that police abolition can only happen with the abolition of capitalism and not prior to it, both liberal and conservative politicians recognize that the idea of police abolition poses a threat to capitalism. After all,

the capitalist class requires the existence of the police to maintain their system of exploitation. Seeing so many people across every major city in America protesting against the police state and the capitalist system, made clear to the ruling class and their political lackeys that they needed to act fast. Many, of course, stuck to the classic standard of law and order, denying the oppression that was evidently taking place. Arguably, the more sinister politicians were actually those who paraded populist slogans and advocated for incremental change, while simultaneously participating in the exploitation of the same people they claimed to support and represent.

These are the Joe Biden and Kamala Harris types, the Andrew Cuomos, Ilhan Omars and even democratic “socialists” who tweet out #blacklivesmatter and call for national bans on chokeholds as if that will change anything. The politicians who tried to remain “colorblind” during the Ferguson riots while denouncing racism in the same breath, the ones who claim to support both sides in order to garner support from a larger, more moderate audience. Once a movement gains traction and becomes a potential threat to their power, they ride the coattails of that movement in order to eventually steer it towards its own grave. We see through the facades of the capitalists who claim to be on our side, the reality of the exploitative nature of their livelihood. We see the police reform plans for what they are; measures for which concession would be an overstatement, meant to quell the anger felt by so many workers and give them a false sense of security. All so they can return to their lives of wage slavery and continue selling their labor-power without questioning the very system the ruling class try so desperately to protect.

Besides Joe Biden’s proposed plan to give police an extra \$300 million under the guise of police reform, similar plans have also been proposed and enacted by Democratic politicians in their own cities and states. In New York City for

example, the city council passed what some media sources have called a series of “sweeping police reform bills” which include a “penalty system for police officers with disciplinary issues, a system to intervene with training for officers who are deemed “problematic,” and a bill that puts into law the right to record police interactions.”

It remains highly doubtful that these reforms will have any positive effect on the lives of black working class people who are subject to constant harassment and terror from the police. The police have proven themselves to be nothing more than an organized gang, composed of members who will rush to each other’s defense whenever they are threatened, especially in cases of public scrutiny for the violence they inflict upon innocent civilians. Who will be the ones to enforce the penalty system that deem officers problematic, who will guarantee the right to record the police? Likely the police force themselves, who have historically failed to take accountability for any of their actions. And if it is not the police who are overseeing these reforms being implemented, then it will likely be the bourgeois politicians and the same racist criminal justice system that keeps millions of black, brown, and white working class people in prison, forced to perform slave labor in order to produce cheap commodities for our beloved corporations. No matter what sort of institution is created to oversee and penalize police misconduct, it will be sure to be just another apparatus of the same capitalist state that relies on the police to maintain its power. To add insult to injury, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo explicitly told protesters in New York, “You don’t need to protest, you won.” It is clear that the aim of the small, incremental reform measures being passed in cities and states across the country are meant to subdue the angry demonstrators who are protesting against the conditions of police violence and capitalist exploitation that have now been fully exposed for the average worker to see. These changes in policy are meant to convince people that their concerns are finally being addressed, to push

them into complacency, so that the capitalists and their servile politicians can continue unabated in their exploitation of the working class, which has of course been exacerbated by the pandemic.

However, certain bourgeois politicians and political bodies have taken it upon themselves to go a step further than the traditional reform measures that have historically been passed whenever a case of serious police brutality makes the news. Two weeks after the initial protests surrounding the murder of George Floyd, it was announced that the Minneapolis City Council had voted to disband its police force, and to install in its place a “transformative new model of public safety.” While the Mayor Jacob Frey did not himself endorse this reform measure, and could not even commit himself to defunding the Minneapolis police force, the Minneapolis City Council’s plan was clearly one in which liberal politicians had taken upon themselves to latch onto an increasingly popular movement on the left, garnished with a radical slogan calling for police “abolition.”

Despite the fact that such a measure would have been unthinkable in American political discourse ten years ago, this is not something to be content with or celebrate, as so many leftists had done with its passage. It has already been made clear that the police and the capitalist system are part of a symbiotic relationship in which they are dependent upon the other to uphold the conditions that allow for its very existence. While the Minneapolis police department as it currently exists may be disbanded, whatever new structure is put in its place will fundamentally fulfill the same role that the police have always filled.

Problems with community policing

Many anti-police activists want to reallocate funding and replace the police department with a community-based institution that would protect the safety and rights of its citizens. Some suggestions call for social workers and mental health professionals to replace police officers in

response to certain 911 calls. While it is true that mental health workers would serve as more effective first responders than armed police, the police departments across the United States that already work with social workers and victim advocates offer little flexibility. Mental health professionals often face bureaucratic limitations when collaborating with the police force and legal system, which hinders them from being able to truly help a victim in need. While an extensive mental health support institution seems like a great idea in theory, the institution as it would exist under capitalism would allow for greater potential harm.

Psychology as it exists under capitalism is a bourgeois institution, in the same way that education is, through its promotion of bourgeois propaganda that it instills into students from a young age. This does not mean that there are no benefits to psychotherapy, or that all therapists are bourgeois; it simply means that mental health care under capitalism is shaped by bourgeois interests. For instance, treatment for disorders such as ADHD and depression are often centered on increasing productivity, and people are taught to define their self-worth based on how much they contribute to society. Even class conscious psychotherapists may find that capitalist mentalities continue to permeate into their practice despite their wishes. For example, a major criterion for Conduct Disorder (which is usually the basis for the diagnosis of Antisocial Personality Disorder in adulthood) in the DSM-V includes opposition to authority and disregard for the law. This includes minor situations like shoplifting or lying to the police, both of which are instances that cannot accurately reflect a person's mental state. A child who grew up in poverty, shoplifts to survive, and has developed a distrust of the police force due to their own negative experiences, is simply reacting to the material conditions of their reality. Pathologizing such behaviors when they are a response to capitalism ignores the traumatizing effect of capitalism and pushes the sole burden of responsibility onto the individual. Replacing the

police force with an institution of mental health workers may increase the pathologization of "criminal activity." Furthermore, this cannot be a solution to policing, as it prevents therapists from providing full treatment and further alienates minorities who already distrust the healthcare system. Ultimately, replacing the police force with a community-based mental health care system is simply putting therapists in police uniforms and forcing them to cooperate with the state.

When the Minneapolis City Council originally announced a plan for disbanding the police force, they themselves had said that there will still be people needed to respond to violent crimes; they simply wouldn't be called police. Police officers do not stop being police officers simply because they are called by another name. Furthermore, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey had even made clear that the city plans to focus on reform instead of abolition. Disbanding the police and replacing it with a "less corrupt" institution is not abolition, but instead, a shift in leadership. Reform cannot be part of a "gradual change" towards communism, as capitalism can only be abolished through the self-organization of the working class and an internationalist revolutionary party. Replacing racist police officers with community leaders is not enough to end police brutality or state violence against the working class. Just as electing "the lesser evil" politician into power does not change how the government functions, disbanding the police force and giving it a new name does not change the fact that both are institutions which exist only to defend the interests of capital.

Camden, New Jersey

In the midst of all of the calls for police abolition, the example of Camden, New Jersey has been floated around by many leftists as evidence for how their experimental vision for society could be implemented in practice. The headlines of the posts on social media usually declare how the city of Camden dismantled its police department in 2012, with lower crime rates following in the

years after. Needless to say, the headlines and social media posts, buoyed by mainstream news outlets that want Camden to be the model that the abolition movement looks towards for guidance, have been more than slightly misleading.

Crime rates did go down after the implementation of Camden's police reform. In 2013, there were 1,950 reported violent crimes in the city. 5 years later in 2018, that number had decreased to 1,197. This is a significant decrease of around 38%. However, to understand why those numbers decreased as they did, police abolitionists should remember the reasons why people generally resort to crime. Crime is mainly a result of poverty, unemployment, poor education, and lack of resources for children – all of which are byproducts of capitalism. Camden did not pass a series of social reforms aimed at ameliorating the conditions of the working class and at eliminating the root causes of poverty. Instead, the supposed dismantling of the Camden Police Department and the ensuing changes to policing in the city took place under quite the opposite auspices.

In fact, the Camden PD was dismantled due to a series of state austerity measures, with other social programs and city services getting cut along with the police department. It's not surprising then that the space left by the city police's absence was then filled by both the Camden County Police, as well as by an overhauled system of surveillance intended to stop crimes before they happened. Though liberals will point to this new system as an example of community policing, with officers on foot patrol interacting with the citizens of the communities that they occupy, this narrative disguises the Orwellian nature of these reforms, which included a marked increase in the presence of security cameras, secret microphones, license plate readers, mobile observation posts, and police intelligence systems. This extreme level of surveillance made it possible for police to write up civilians for the

pettiest of crimes, causing cases to increase by 97,000 from 2013 to 2014. The county police wrote 99 tickets for riding a bike without a bell in the timeframe between July and October 2014; only 1 ticket had been written for the same crime the previous year. This system of policing also allowed for the use of excessive force without consequence, which disproportionately affected the black population. It is ironic that liberals use this town as the ideal that police reform should strive towards, when it was found that a black person in Camden is 4.5 times more likely to face aggression and the use of force at the hands of the police during arrest, compared to a white person. The same system of policing exists in Camden as in every other part of the country, albeit modernized and more suited to the sensitivities of liberals in the suburbs who like empire and capitalism to be cloaked in friendlier terms.

In short, the model of policing that exists in Camden, though touted by politicians and liberal political pundits as a solution to the problems of racism inherent in policing, is merely a strengthening of the same oppressive surveillance state that exists across the country, and certainly not anything resembling police abolition.

Conclusion

When the Minneapolis City Council originally announced its plan in June to disband the police force, many leftists across the US celebrated this as a step forward, claiming this was a necessary step "towards socialism." On the contrary, it was actually harmful towards workers and the communist programme. Not only does this narrative completely misrepresent abolition and reform, it also convinces people into thinking that a gradual approach to communism can work. Furthermore, the dying down of protests since the original announcement shows that the government achieved its intended goal – to placate the workers by telling them that their concerns will be addressed, only to again urge them to simply vote in November if they want to

see “real” change. Although protests are still taking place in cities like New York and Portland, the nationwide hype has died down and people are simply being urged to vote if they want to have their voice heard.

This chain of events over the past two months is not surprising. The Black Lives Matter movement was co-opted years ago in support of the Democrats, and this redirecting of police brutality protests into electoralism is simply an extension of that. Addressing working class grievances with electoral promises has been a tactic that dates back centuries. This goes to show that changes in policy and voting do nothing to address the root of issues which affect the working class. The police will continue to terrorize innocent black and homeless people regardless of which politician is in power, and regardless of whatever community system “replaces” the police force in Minneapolis.

The police can only be abolished when capitalism is abolished. Capitalism can only be abolished through the self-organization of the working class and the formation of an internationalist revolutionary party, not through gradual reform or ballots. As communists, we support the protesters demonstrating against police brutality, but it is important that we recognize that there is no organized working class movement that exists today. While it is always positive to see elements of class struggle evident in the protests, without a unified movement, they will be disorganized and fail to achieve any long-term goals towards liberation.

The working class must organize along class lines. Treating police brutality as solely a racial issue, rather than a class issue, inherently involves class collaboration. It assumes that black people are a monolith who share the same interests regardless of their class position. A disorganized movement, in combination with the increasing acceptance of identity politics in the mainstream media, has essentially allowed for

co-optation by the petty bourgeoisie. It only shows how deeply embedded capitalism is to every aspect of our lives when you realize the fact that protesting the murder of an unarmed black man has naturally led to the promotion of black-owned businesses and “progressive” corporations. How exactly does supporting a black-owned restaurant help black workers who are terrorized by police violence? It just doesn’t. The black business owners who comprise the petty bourgeoisie do not share the same class interests as black workers. Their racial identity does not change the fact that business owners exploit the employees that they hire, including those who advertise themselves as small, family-owned businesses that “support” the local community. A bourgeois black person simply does not have the same experience as a working class black person, and their interactions with the police may differ heavily due to their class position. It is possible to acknowledge the fact that police brutality in the United States is heavily racialized, and disproportionately affects black people, while also noting that the oppression is rooted in class.

Recognizing that police brutality is a class issue does not ignore the impact of racism. In fact, we must be sure to incorporate the interests of black workers and other minority groups into the interests of workers as a whole. The example of bus drivers in Minneapolis, New York, and Chicago refusing to drive protestors to jail was an excellent demonstration of class solidarity which helped show that workers of all races share the same class interests. We must encourage this kind of solidarity among workers, as it shows resistance against bourgeois tactics that have historically been used to divide the working class to distract from the real threat and turn us against each other. After all, class action against police violence is in the interest of all workers, since an attack on one section of the working class is an attack on us all.

EL & JC



“Democracy under assault”: Democracy for whom?

The rhetoric between the two political parties that dominate the ruling class in the United States has led to increasing polarization, with COVID-19, the ensuing economic crisis, and the anti-police brutality protests last summer as points of contention between them. The 2020 election in November of last year added new fuel to the fire, as President Trump spent the last few months contesting his loss to former Vice-President Joe Biden. Lawsuits, litigations, and endless claims of electoral fraud from the Trump campaign have so far proved fruitless for him, as they have been continuously rejected in court with very few exceptions. The only real victory scored by Trump so far in the two months since his loss has been in convincing his supporters that the election was stolen from him and that in reality he is the legitimate winner, supposedly having won in a landslide. This helps him maintain both his relevance and his grip on the Republican Party post-presidency.

Another result of Trump’s insistence on the idea that he won the election is that his supporters and

the organizations who back him have now been riled up to the point of believing that whether or not he gets a second term is a matter of life or death for the country and for themselves. The far-right and demagogic politics that Trump embodies has translated itself into real-world groups that seek to impose an even more reactionary form of capitalism onto the United States and the world. Such organizations and movements, including Blue Lives Matter, the Proud Boys, or “MAGA” – some of which initially formed prior to a Trump presidency – have steadily grown over the past four years to the point where the most reactionary elements are able to pull off theatrical stunts like the Capitol riot that took place on January 6. In many ways that is exactly what it was – bourgeois political theater.

The global crisis

The political crisis here in the United States may appear unique in this historic moment and in the weeks and even months after. After all, it is

not everyday that one of the most important and prestigious US government buildings is successfully stormed by an angry mob. Yet the basic underlying forces in this political crisis, and the causes which have brought it to the surface in such a chaotic manner, are quite similar to that which many nations across the globe are currently experiencing.

One only has to take a look at the political developments across the world for the past five or ten years to be able to witness the increasing tendencies towards right-wing and reactionary populism across the globe. Whether one looks at the United Kingdom, Hungary, Brazil, the Philippines, Colombia, Poland, Turkey, Russia (and the list goes on and on), one finds that a sort of nationalist populism has been rocking the world, and successfully in many places. Disdain for and measures against immigrants and ethnic minorities, calls hearkening to national glory and the restoration of the specific nation's former strong position on the world stage, the directing of blame outwards towards other nations who have supposedly been the real enemies of the people and, by extension, the working class of the native country. All of these are but some of the hallmarks of this nationalist populism which has been rearing its head in the world in recent times.

This right-wing populism has seen its story play out similarly in other nations, including the sort of political crisis within the ruling class that we see in the United States with the clash between the "Trumpian" wing of the Republican Party (and the other extremist elements allied with them) against the Democrats and some of the more Moderate Republicans. In Britain for example, this sort of crisis occurred in a likewise fashion with the Brexit Referendum and the ensuing ruling class charade for the next four years. This is because in both the United States and Britain, as in all other countries, the capitalist class has for some time now been faced with a crisis of profitability resulting from the end of the last cycle of accumulation, which terminated in the early

seventies. It is key to understand the results of the end of this cycle, as it and the general world economic crisis underlie this resurgence of nationalist populism across the globe and the political crises it entails.

With the end of the postwar boom period, the capitalist class worldwide had to begin a new and even more ruthless search for ever-greater profits around the globe. To increase their profits, the capitalist class was therefore required to increase the exploitation of that sole force which can generate more surplus value, that being the working class. One way that the capitalist class sought to accomplish this aim was through relocating entire swathes of industry from the traditional metropolises of capitalism to the less-developed and traditionally subjugated peripheral nations. In these countries, the workers were much more easily exploited, unlike the workers in the capitalist metropolises who had histories of organizing and had won certain protections and concessions from the capitalist class that put an obstacle in the path towards exploiting them further.

Throughout the 80s and 90s, the United Kingdom underwent a deliberate program of deindustrialization led by Margaret Thatcher in this vein. Occupations once central to an industrial economy, from ship building, coal mining, to textile manufacturing, were all wiped but out in a decade, those jobs lost. These industrial and manufacturing jobs had been relatively well-paying, and this meant that millions of workers in the United Kingdom had now lost their livelihoods (like in the Rust Belt in the US). These workers in these former industrial areas were of course left behind and neglected by that class which rules over and exploits them, and so in the course of twenty years without answers but only empty bourgeois platitudes and vicious austerity programs, it was inevitable that there were some sort of backlash, albeit unconscious and confused, by these workers.

The reaction of many of these workers to their

thirty years of continued deprivation and impoverishment was to vote for Brexit in the 2016 referendum. The British ruling class foolishly thought that by creating another electoral charade to put a democratic face on their bourgeois dictatorship, that they would be able to forward their interests as they always had. Yet this ignored the reality on the ground which was that millions of working class people across the country were dissatisfied with the way that they had been treated and were ready to take out their anger on these neoliberal elites. So what followed was that these workers were misled by a faction within the capitalist class, who cooked up images of migrants coming into Britain thanks to lax EU border restrictions and taking up space and wealth that was rightfully British, and who were therefore to blame for the problems faced by these workers, and not the capitalists' search for more profits. It was this group that would embody this sort of nationalist populist tendency in the United Kingdom. Globalization which brought job losses and declines in living standards for workers across the industrialized world, combined with the fact that there has been no real workers' movement or political reference point for workers to truly speak of, have both led to this phenomenon of reactionary populist parties gaining traction across the globe.

In the United States the situation is quite similar. Due to the same crisis of profitability and the same end of the cycle of accumulation which hobbled the capitalist class in Britain, eventually forcing them to relocate industry from the native country over to the peripheries of capitalism, the capitalist class in the United States underwent a similar process of exporting the factories which had traditionally defined life for many workers. The Steel Belt in the Northeastern states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana etc. became known as the Rust Belt once the jobs had noticeably disappeared from that region en masse. The industry which had once provided many working class people in cities like Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Cincinnati with relatively

decent wages were now gone, and the service-economy jobs which came to replace them were nowhere near as well paying or stable.

This was again all part of the scheme by the capitalist class to extract more profits from the working class in order to keep their world system afloat for longer. The profitability crisis which spells the end of the cycle of accumulation demands a massive devaluation of capital in order for a new cycle to start again. Unlike capitalism's crises in the nineteenth century, a global capitalist economy means this can essentially only be accomplished through a war on the scale of capitalism's two prior world wars. The capitalist class well understands the social consequences that something like that would entail, and while the ruling class is quite barbaric, they are by no means hell-bent on starting some massively destructive war, and so they have spent the past 50 years trying to erect all sorts of measures and policies to stem that tide for as long as possible. In order to continue trying to cope with this general crisis of profitability, the working class in the United States was subjected to its own version of the economic austerity of Thatcherism, except on this side of the pond it was called Reaganism. Bogus theories like trickle-down-economics were used to justify the increasingly impoverished and precarious situation that the working class in the United States found itself in. The new doctrine of neoliberalism had come to predominate within the capitalist class in the United States and across the world which sought to ratify free-trade agreements, treaties which essentially covered up the process of the capitalist class exporting these jobs to other countries so that they could extract more profits and loosen up the rules of their own game.

Fast forward twenty or thirty years to the United States in the 2010s and the position of the working class has only gotten worse since the days of Reagan. As the global economic crisis continues to push the limits of how deep it can go, the working class has been further battered

by attacks on its real wages, increases in unemployment, and the stripping of what relatively few protections workers in the United States have in the workplace. The blue-collar workers that have seen their and their friends' jobs and livelihoods lost for the past twenty years have nothing to show for it and share the same resentment as those workers in England that went through the same experience.

And it is not just these sorts of factory and blue-collar workers that have seen their societal position decrease over the last few decades. The petite bourgeoisie, who in typical American political discourse is referred to as the small business owner or sometimes the local mom-and-pop shop, has also seen its standing dip below what it once was, and even occasionally costing these petit bourgeois small business owners their livelihoods as well. The crisis of 2008 demonstrated to many of these people the real political insignificance that they seemingly occupied compared to the larger capitalists. As the big banks and auto-manufacturers were bailed out by the government, small business owners across the country saw their businesses fail and decline into bankruptcy. There was a bailout for Wall Street but not for Main Street, and this sort of populist slogan which was first raised most significantly during the Occupy Wall Street Protests in 2011 transformed itself into a general political feeling shared by large parts of the country, certainly amongst many petit bourgeois, who felt that the so-called politician class had sold them and their typical privileges out. Some of these people ended up becoming proletarianized, and others managed to ride out the storm and keep their businesses and class status intact. Either way, the end result was another large grouping of people, a large section of the petite bourgeoisie, that was dissatisfied with the political status quo and therefore open to anything that would shake up the establishment, whether it came from the left or the right.

Ideally in a situation like this, this would be the perfect time for communists to push forward

working class struggles and seriously work to challenge the dominance of the capitalist system. Yet the working class is and has been for the most part absent from the political and historical scene for quite some time, and there was no real pole to generate any sort of mass working class militancy. The absence of any proletarian alternative during the attacks of capitalism against the working class and even the petit bourgeois has led to a situation in which some (though by no means all or even the majority) working class people and certainly a substantial portion of the petit bourgeois have tied their political aspirations to the right-wing populism of Trump and his campaigns. Bernie Sanders at first seemed to offer a left-populist alternative to Trump in the beginning of 2016 yet this was snuffed out by the Clinton campaign and Democratic Party apparatus, and so Trump seemed to be the embodiment of these groups of peoples' interests against the technocrats which ruled over them (even though much of what he promised was essentially the same as what the capitalist class in the United States had already been carrying out for the past 16 or more years).

It is as the Internationalist Workers' Group said in 2016 following the election of Donald Trump:

"This nationalist turn is a product of the rejection of years of failure from the political promoters of globalization. This populism and nationalism in politics is the result of the failure of decades of official policy. This process has delegitimized ruling parties around the world whose power during the decades of capitalist prosperity was once unquestioned."

Trump's real influence

All in all, the far-right populist movement that has emerged in the US has little to do with Trump himself. Many Trump supporters do not share a coherent ideology or platform; rather, they support Trump because of what he represents to them, regardless of his real position or beliefs. Trump is really a symbol, and what he

represents is more important than the policies he's enacted or what he's said in office. Many of his supporters believe that he offers a solution to their problems and their disillusionment with the neoliberal administration, which is a result of decades of economic stagnation leading into the global economic crisis of today. While it is true that Trump helped to incite much of the right-wing violence and white nationalist demonstrations that have taken place over the past four years, including the storming of the Capitol on January 6th, to claim that he is solely responsible for this reactionary movement is widely inaccurate.

Much of the reactionary elements that are present within the working class do not emerge spontaneously. A sizable portion of Trump supporters are regular conservatives who are alienated by capitalism and have been taught to believe that minorities and immigrants are the ones to blame for their problems. It is a result of bourgeois propaganda, living sheltered lives, and feeling like they need a scapegoat. Race has historically been used to divide the working class, and for many conservatives who fall for this sort of right-wing propaganda have fallen for a tactic that has been used throughout American history for centuries. Institutions like the police and political parties take advantage of this and frame issues along racial lines; the racial biases are very much real, but the liberal media and the left's hyperfocus on race in such a reductive manner is a major factor on the increasing polarization between Americans. A working class white individual who falls prey to this type of propaganda may grow more disdainful towards people of other races, eventually falling for white nationalist slogans because they see no other alternative – despite the fact that the issues are rooted in class. That is the main thing that the capitalist class does not want them to realize, because once they do, the threat of workers organizing based on class interests becomes real.

In spite of all this, it is a myth that the white working class makes up for the largest demographic

of Trump voters. The majority of Trump voters do not have a college degree; a lack of secondary education is often conflated with being working class, when it is not the case. Class position is dictated by your relationship to the means of production, not income or education status. Many of Trump's so-called "white working class voters" are actually petit bourgeois small business owners who lack a college education, but are otherwise capitalists themselves. Historically, in the US, the lowest strata of the working class does not vote at all – for a multitude of reasons: one of the most important being disillusionment towards both political parties and the electoral system, with the understanding that voting for a "less corrupt" or "more progressive" politician will do nothing to change their class position or improve their conditions of living.

The majority of the rioters at the Capitol were petit bourgeois Trump supporters – varying between America First conservative voters, differing degrees of white nationalists, and full-blown neo-Nazis. They hold great disdain for the wealthy elites who were bailed out from bankruptcy by the state, who still continue making money through upholding the status quo. The rioters believed that it was their right to take back the "control" that had been "usurped" from them when Trump had lost the election to Biden. After calls to voter fraud and recounting ballots had failed, the only alternative they had left was to attempt to take control through force. Trump was a symbol that his supporters could rally around as they made their demands. The so-called "revolution" to overturn the election was not much different from a temper tantrum that a child has when they do not get what they want. This is made clear by the fact that Trump had incited the event when he could not accept his defeat in the electoral race, and neither could any of his supporters, including some members of the Republican Party; only when circumstances were no longer in their favor did they choose to oppose the same institutions that they had defended merely two months prior.

The working class at this stage is still weak and unorganized, and therefore unable to intervene or pose a real challenge to this level of bourgeois manipulation. The storming of the Capitol has only created more confusion, as the working class as a whole still does not know where its interest lies; thus, it remains vulnerable to the ideological traps of the ruling class. Both Trump's "MAGA" vision of a "new" nationalism and the fantasy of economic prosperity as well as the Democrats' push to defend democracy against the threat of a "fascist uprising" or dictatorship simply represent two competing factions of the bourgeoisie who cannot offer the working class nothing but a continued exploitation. The global crisis and its effects have only been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the exploitation is set to worsen even after the pandemic comes to an end; the workers of the world are the ones who will pay the price.

The liberal narrative

The liberal capitalist press, the Democratic Party, and all of their messengers and influencers on the internet have been quick to make a general hysteria about the events that occurred at the Capitol. When the original media reports about the events labelled the people storming the Capitol as "protestors," many criticized this as being too lenient. They then took to using more forceful language to describe the groups that partook in the action, landing on a "mob," "rioters," and "domestic terrorists." CNN even described the Trump supporters storming the Capitol as "anarchists" in a moment of panicked centrist nonsense.

Whatever label was decided on for describing these people, one thing was clear for the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie embodied in the Democratic Party: this was a direct challenge not only to their political dominance against the more "Trumpian" wing of the capitalists (oil executives, weapons manufacturers), but to the very structure and functioning of American capitalist democracy itself – at least, that is the narrative

being pushed forth by the ruling class. Politics and the management of the affairs of the bourgeoisie was meant to be an affair of mutual agreement between the various factions of the capitalist class. Each party was meant to take turns in power and hand over their powers to the other team when they won in bourgeois elections. There was meant to be an "orderly transition of power" between the two parties if the ruling party lost or vice versa, and the basic rules of the game were meant to be respected. Trump's more authoritarian and illiberal politics have for a while now threatened that status quo, especially through 2020, where before the election he attempted to make changes to the Postal Service in order to make mail-in ballots harder to use, and after the election he refused to accept that he had lost. While his various legal challenges have failed, he has inspired in his supporters the conviction that the election has been stolen from them, and that it is up to them and their force of arms to overturn the results. The assault on the Capitol was just the culmination of his rhetoric for the past months, and it brought to light the seriousness of the situation for the liberal wing of the capitalists.

For the first time, Trump's rhetoric and fueling of the flames of right-wing extremism and white nationalism have posed a tangible and violent threat to not only the lives of most of the politicians in Congress, but also seemingly to bourgeois democracy in America itself. In reality, the rioters were not going to take over the government and there was not going to be some coup d'état. But what the rioters did was of much more symbolic value. Since the incident, the capitalist press has gone on about how terrible it is that a "symbol of democracy for the world" has been desecrated in such a tragic manner. The Capitol has now for the past few days been described as if it were some sort of temple to Democracy, and the actions of the Trump supporters there was an insurrection or assault against Democracy itself.

To that we would of course pose the question,

democracy for whom? The word "democracy" has lost all meaning, watered down from its original conception and is now merely associated with bourgeois democracy. The democracy of the United States is the democracy of the exploiters; the democracy of the capitalist class where they collectively decide how best to carry out the exploitation and degradation of the working class – of not only American workers, but also of workers living in countries that are vulnerable to the onslaught of American imperialism. Whereas Cory Booker, Ted Cruz, Tom Malinowski, or Tim Ryan have a real democratic power in the sense that they are able to decide how to manage the capitalist state, the worker does not possess any power of that sort. The only "power" officially delegated to the worker in bourgeois democracy is the ability once every two years to vote for whether to continue the term of their current masters, or to abrogate their time in office with a new capitalist politician. Even then, the outcomes of bourgeois elections are more often conditioned by which candidate is able to raise enough money from their wealthy capitalist donors than by the will of their particular constituencies. Even when we talk of policy changes within the realm of capitalism, "public opinion," itself already molded to a great degree by the capitalist system, has practically no impact at all on what policies actually go into effect.

We must recognize then that the supposed "democracy" that the capitalist news media has shed so many tears for in the last two weeks is not a democracy for the vast majority of the citizens of the country or the world, but for the capitalist class which rules over us and exploits us. While the act of Trump supporters storming the Capitol in such an unorthodox way could have been frightening to the capitalist factions who wish to maintain the post-Cold War neoliberal status quo, they are quick to propagandize the situation for their own interests. Many working people in this country and around the world are slowly waking up to the fact that we have no stake in this so-called democracy, and that it is in fact a charade before our eyes.

While many leftists and faux communists became supporters of Joe Biden's electoral campaign, abandoning any semblance of a real class-based politics for a moment of opportunism, some were beginning to crawl their way out of the capitalist cocoon as they saw the right-wing cabinet picks that Biden has rolled out, and how he has already reneged on many of his promises. Some were finally breaking out of the mindset that Trump was the cause of all of our problems, and again taking the baby steps towards understanding that both capitalist parties share none of our interests, and that the entire capitalist system is at fault. Now, the liberal capitalist press replays the videos and pictures from the Trump supporters storming the Capitol endlessly, and sheds crocodile tears about the attack on human decency and our beloved democracy waged by these "fascists." Again, many get sucked into the bourgeois propaganda trap of believing that this exploitative democracy is somehow worth defending. The fascist enemy is supposedly at the gates, and because of that fact we have to abandon all of our principles and any idea of working class political and organizational independence from the capitalists, and throw our lot into defending American capitalist democracy from the apparently "bigger" threat, as they would have us believe.

With the events of the Capitol "uprising" taking place only two weeks before Inauguration Day, Biden was able to score a massive propaganda victory. He and his lackeys in the media were able to use these scenes from the Capitol to contrast his supposedly benevolent presidency with that of his predecessor to remove Trump from office. The highly anticipated impeachment is? nothing more than a symbolic gesture that has no material consequence, especially considering that Trump's term was already in its last days. It will also be used to tamp down on working class dissent, as anyone who opposes the Biden presidency is now forced into the same camp as the right-wing extremists who stormed the Capitol, and not only in an argumentative context. There are practical steps being taken in

this direction by various capitalist politicians within the Democratic Party who align with Joe Biden. Already the liberal wing of the capitalists have taken to calling these Trump supporters “domestic terrorists” in an effort to justify the extension of the surveillance state that has already been intact since the beginning of the War on Terror. Biden has rolled out plans for laws against the broad “domestic terror”; a move being applauded not just by the expected centrist technocrats, but also by supposedly “socialist” politicians like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and her allies in Congress. These so-called socialists have also been at the forefront of calls to increase the police presence and activity at the Capitol, both on January 6th and in the future to guard against the supposed insurrectionary threat. Because of the fact that a police officer died during the riot, left-wing politicians like Senator Bernie Sanders have tried to position themselves as the true champions of law and order and of the “thin blue line.” They now see the opportunity to take right-wing positions and talking points to use for their own political gain, and to further strengthen American capitalist democracy against the right-wing extremist “threat”.

It is clear then that the incoming Biden administration, representative of the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie, sees itself threatened by the new and emboldened right-wing populist movement that Trump helped inspire. In order to fight against this growing threat, it has painted a narrative portraying the storming of the Capitol as representative of something that endangers the well-being of every American, including the working class of this country, and that the only way to combat these reactionaries is to work together to fortify our supposedly democratic institutions. They want us to believe that we must throw our lot in with the “benevolent” democracy that works to exploit us because going any other route would not only be too risky, it would imperil that democracy itself and put us on the same team as these Trump supporters.

The left-wing of capital

What was perhaps most notable about the events that transpired at the Capitol was the obvious difference in police presence and police enforcement when compared with the Black Lives Matter protests over the summer, following the death of George Floyd. Over the summer, as protests sprouted up across the country (and worldwide), which eventually turned into riots and looting, they were met with an immediate and militarized response from not just their respective police departments, but various consortiums of the National Guard as well. Even in locations where the protests were entirely peaceful, such as on the highway in Philadelphia in early June or in DC on June 1st, militarized police quickly emerged and brutalized the protestors standing there and the journalists recording the actions. These protests did take place on important government property, such as the Capitol, but took place either on roads or some distance away from government buildings like the White House.

The police presence at the Capitol storming was of course much more muted. Whereas the Black Lives Matter protesters were greeted with throngs of fully decked-out police, the Trump supporters that mobilized there were met with a relatively smaller and more dispersed police force that was not nearly as militarized. While the police did eventually resort to force (as in the case with the woman who was shot and killed by them there), they were much more averse and hesitant to using force than during the summer protests. Add to this the various instances where police officers took selfies with the Trump supporters.

The situation is complex and it is impossible to ignore the differences in police brutality and violence. However, many (including large portions of the capitalist press) have explained this difference in a reductionist manner, claiming that the sole reason that there was such a militarized response to the BLM protests over the summer in comparison to the Capitol storming

was because the summer protestors were black, and the Capitol stormers were white. The Capitol Storming as a whole has been depicted as an instance of “white privilege,” where the rioters/protestors were able to walk past the police because of the fact that they were white. Had they been black, then the police surely would’ve cracked down sooner. This is an incredibly simplistic and harmful lens to view the events that transpired. It ignores the real reason for the difference in police presence and use of force; their politics as well as their class composition.

The Trump supporters that stormed the Capitol did so at the whim of their cultish leader, Donald Trump, who happens to occupy the most powerful office in the country. While they may talk of “revolution” or imagine themselves as rebels or a part of some new countercultural movement, in reality they are reactionaries attempting to subvert bourgeois liberal democracy in favor of an even more rigid and authoritarian version of capitalism. Furthermore, their interests align with those of Trump and the Republican Party. Their politics are not radical in the slightest. Instead, their societal vision is meant to reinforce the power and privilege that the capitalist class already enjoys, and to bring America back to the glory days where it truly reigned supreme on the international stage. It is no wonder then that the police, who are meant to protect private property and maintain the capitalist system through force, would not seriously challenge the Trump supporters, at least initially.

The only reason that they later did force them out and take action was because the actions of the Trump supporters were eventually realized to be detrimental to the preservation of the status quo and the sanctity of electoral politics. Their reaction was not due to any class consciousness on their part, or because their movement represents some potential anger and frustration against the capitalist class, as some leftists have claimed. The story of these Trump supporters being part of the “white working class” has

again been brought out because of these events, with many making the argument that they are merely fed up with capitalism but lack a proper political orientation. In reality, the vast majority of these people were not working class people from Appalachia, or some factory workers from the Rust Belt. They were petit bourgeois, CEOs, police officers, lawyers, and politicians. This confirms the fact that this was no disoriented and confused attack against capitalism. Instead, it was a quite conscious effort to reassert the strong-man and authoritarian dominance of the bourgeoisie against the various tendencies and social movements that they see as threats to their privileges.

In contrast, the protestors that took to the streets in the wake of George Floyd’s death had much more “radical” politics (radical in comparison to the liberal mainstream), especially in the first week or so of the nationwide rebellion. The initial protestors in late May and early June were more directly anti-capitalist, using slogans such as “abolish the police” or “ACAB.” While the slogan of and movement to “abolish the police” has some issues (mainly the fact that it often ignores that the police can only be abolished with the overthrow of capitalism, which the IWG covers in the article here), it is clearly a threat to the capitalist class as it challenges the institution of policing. The explicitly anti-police politics and rhetoric of the initial rioters (as well as the fact that several police stations were taken over and set on fire) was something that the capitalist state realized it had to combat, which is what happened in such brutal fashion. The class composition of these initial protests was also largely proletarian, although even in the early days there were some petit bourgeois elements, such as black and brown business owners, that tried to take away a class perspective of the struggle. Within the first two weeks, however, those actors were largely on the outside condemning violence and trying to stop the movement from spreading.

There is also certainly something to be said about

the change that took place in the politics and class composition of the George Floyd and Black Lives Matter protests over the weeks and months since the first protests. The slogan of “abolish the police” was substituted with the reformist slogan of “defund the police.” While some defended this move as being in line with the abolition of the police, as defunding was supposedly the method to reach the goal of abolition, the adoption of the latter slogan clearly signaled a shift away from any sort of radical politics and back towards bourgeois and institutional terrain. The police were from then on not meant to be combatted or abolished in the streets, or at the hands of the working class’ own independent and revolutionary self-organization, but instead this was meant to take place in the halls of government of the capitalist state. The idea that the police would be abolished by simply defunding them demonstrated a lack of understanding of what that abolition would even signify. This slogan of defunding would go on to be watered down even further as the months went on, with solutions now revolving around how to reform the police and turn them into the enforcers of some “community safety.” It is no surprise that as the politics of the movement was oriented more and more towards the bourgeois liberalism of the Democratic Party, that these protests ceased being a threat to the capitalist class, and were then met with less police repression. This change of politics of course owed in large part (though not entirely) to the change in class composition of the protests over the initial weeks, as they became more and more filled with petit bourgeois people of all colors, who brought the message of nonviolence, compliance with the police, electoralism, and supporting minority-owned businesses. This new class orientation of the protests is another useful tool for examining why there were such disparities in police presence between the June BLM protests and last week’s storming of the Capitol.

Consequences for the working class

In response to the so-called “insurrection” at the Capitol, Biden plans to pass a law against domestic terrorism, which will include increased funding to combat “ideologically inspired violent extremists.” If we have learned anything from the repercussions of the Patriot Act, then we know that this law will not target far-right extremists and white nationalists – they are not a threat to the established ruling order. The vagueness of the term “ideologically inspired violent extremist” can easily be just as easily applied to any communist, anarchist, or left-wing activist whose views are deemed too radical in the eyes of the Biden administration. It is clear that the government does not view far-right white nationalists as a real threat; if they had, the police presence would have been just as militarized and repressive as it was at the anti-police brutality protests last summer. Just as easily as Biden denounced the Capitol rioters as a mob of insurrectionists and domestic terrorists, he had similarly denounced BLM rioters as violent looters and criminals just a few months before. During his campaign, Biden proposed increased funding for the police and called for the arrest of protestors partaking in violent riots and looting. There is nothing stopping the police from militarizing further and cracking down even more on protestors if this law is passed. This will make it even more difficult for any left-wing protest to take place without heavy police repression, let alone any real demonstrations of class struggle or working class organization.

A largely unorganized group of Trump-supporting conservatives and white nationalists storming the Capitol does not pose a real threat to the capitalist system, since it fundamentally boils down to choosing one bourgeois politician over another – rather than actually challenging the structures that allow those same politicians to maintain their power. This was made clear by the lack of police response until the rioters were already inside the building – what motivation would the police have had to stop a group of

people who ultimately shared their interests? The far-right demonstrators only posed a “threat” to one faction of the ruling class embodied in the Democratic Party and in a small, moderate subsection of the Republican Party. This assault against the technocrats who wish to maintain the status quo was in no way a frontal attack on the capitalist system, nor were there any real seeds of working class consciousness among the protestors themselves. The rioters’ so-called “revolution” was merely an attempt to remove the opposing politicians from office and replace them with Trump, who they saw as best representing their petit-bourgeois interests.

On the other hand, the anti-police brutality protests that were incited by George Floyd’s death prompted a more violent response. Although the racial demographic of many of the protestors was a factor in police bias, the nature of the protests – the fact that it transcended race and became a display of working class solidarity against police oppression – was the real threat. However, the protests quickly descended into reformism after the first two weeks, as it was co-opted in favor of petit-bourgeois interests. No organized class elements emerged from the protests and genuine strikes in solidarity were rare, overshadowed by calls to support small black-owned businesses. The fact still remains that in theory, an anti-police brutality protest that acknowledges class-based exploitation is a direct threat to the institution of police – which exists only to defend the interests of capital. Any future demonstrations of class struggle in the form of strikes and protests will likely be met with force, as the idea of workers organizing together based on class interests, especially across all the different sections of the proletariat, is one that the bourgeoisie cannot allow to come to fruition if it wishes to maintain its stronghold on capital.

Corporate dominance and its implications

Exploitation of the working class will surely be justified using bourgeois propaganda, as calls to “defend democracy” have historically

been used by the United States to “combat terrorism”. This rhetoric is already being pushed with regards to social media companies banning Trump. We would like to make clear that we are not advocating for Trump to have access to a platform in which he can spew hatred and bigotry. We are simply concerned about the implications this raises about tech companies and the amount of control they have over the internet, since it is clear now that their power surpasses that of the state in this regard.

As communists, we know that corporations hold the real power in society, but the events of the past week have made that abundantly clear to the general population. The class who owns the means of production is granted all the power. Opposing the capitalist system goes beyond opposing the government; replacing corrupt politicians with “less corrupt” ones, restructuring the government towards social democracy, and maintaining an “anti-government” but “pro business” stance are all antithetical to the programme of communism. Leftists and liberals alike have been condoning the actions of social media companies, stating that censorship is necessary to prevent someone like Trump from inciting violence through his platform. When it is brought up that there may be a possibility that this logic could backfire and that tech companies are becoming too powerful, the typical response features a defense of “democracy” in conjunction with a blind trust in corporations. Keeping Trump and his followers of white nationalists off mainstream social media websites such as Twitter and Facebook is done to “prevent bigotry from having a platform”; i.e. the logical conclusion of the “defend democracy” argument when applied to the internet. Censoring bigotry is not the same as putting an end to it; while removing Trump from his platform may prevent gullible followers from falling for his propaganda as easily, his followers who are already committed to white supremacist ideologies have nothing stopping them from creating far-right platforms of their own, such as Parler. The bigotry continues behind closed doors. Even if it were possible to

stop bigotry through censorship, this argument puts the onus of defining bigotry onto those tech companies. This is something that cannot be unbiased, as the company's definition of bigotry will either reflect the political views of the company's board or change to something that is more profitable for the company. For years, it was possible to get a 30-day ban from Facebook for criticizing a member of a "protected group" while racial slurs and homophobia would go undetected. Depending on the phrasing, even valid criticism directed towards a racist white person or a misogynistic man would be characterized as "hate speech" or "bullying and harassment" whereas slurs and hateful comments directed towards minority groups would not violate Community Standards. Facebook's Community Standards has become stricter, with the algorithm now automatically flagging innocent comments as violations and hate speech regardless of context, simply because it contains a certain phrase or word.

Trusting that corporations are simply doing "the right thing" operates under the assumption that corporations lack ulterior motives for doing what society deems is morally correct. If society were to deem fascism as the right ideology to follow tomorrow, there is no doubt that corporations would be posting pro-fascist remarks immediately to generate the most profit – the same way that corporations have been posting "#BLM" to encourage sales after the George Floyd protests. The logic of "holding billionaires accountable" has no grounding in reality even if you were to ignore the lack of legal repercussions: simply because capitalists follow the logic of capital – not the other way around.

The decision of social media companies to remove Trump from his platform is not one guided by morals or politics or any genuine dislike of Trump; it is simply the decision that is most profitable. If Mark Zuckerberg or Jack Dorsey had genuinely cared about keeping Trump's bigotry off their platforms, why did they wait until a new president was elected to do so?

Merely citing the Capitol riot is an excuse, as there have been numerous white supremacist protests in support of Trump that have taken place in the US over the past 4 years. For instance, the Charlottesville Unite the Right rally in August 2017 resulted in the death of counterprotestor Heather Heyer and over 30 injured. Trump consequently expressed sympathies with white nationalists (in his claim that there were "very fine people on both sides") and has legitimized the rise of the far right movement since his inauguration – yet there was no censorship or removal of Trump's account at any point throughout his presidency. If anything, social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter directly aided in the spread of fake news and Trumpian propaganda. It is only now that they can denounce him publicly and claim it is in defense of democracy, because it is within their best interests. It is not a coincidence that Facebook restricted a portion of its membership from posting in groups a few days after the Capitol riot occurred, only to lift the restriction on Inauguration Day. Now that Trump has been impeached for the second time and Biden has been inaugurated as the 46th president, companies can publicly disparage Trump and ban his account without having anything to lose. If they had done so prior to the election and the end of his term, they would have risked alienating Trump and his followers, which would have resulted in fewer customers or a smaller user base – essentially, decreased profit.

Tech companies have always operated alongside the government in the defense of capital. Since Biden has now become the President, corporations will be more outright in their support of him. Algorithms will be catered even more towards liberal propaganda and there will be greater censorship towards dissidents, especially towards communists.

In a world ravaged by a pandemic where everything is now virtual, the seemingly unlimited power of technological corporations is even more dangerous. Censorship of communists and other

workers is not the only concern. Not only will there be more of a crackdown on protests once Biden's new domestic terrorism law is passed, there is also greater implication for militant communists to be flagged for their online activity. Anonymity has always been crucial; it is already difficult enough to limit communication to methods that are encrypted, and even then it isn't a guarantee of total privacy. Companies go so far as to listen in on conversations that people have face-to-face through their phones' microphones, with the intention of selling personal data to advertisers and creating more targeted ads. Given the pervasiveness of technological corporations into every aspect of our lives, it is obvious that communists can be easily tracked down through an online paper trail. This does not mean that we are all risking our livelihood or in danger of being doxxed; there has not been a need to track down communists as of the current political climate, but if there was ever a necessity for it, such as in the case of a third Red Scare, the monopoly of companies like Google and Apple and the virtualization of reality would make it significantly easier to do so. Considering the fact that so many innocent Muslims have been arrested or tracked by the FBI for "ties to terrorism" simply based off "suspicious" online activity after the passage of the Patriot Act, it is not unlikely that communists or organizing workers may be targeted the same way. It may be justified through the "defense of democracy" narrative that is currently being pushed by the ruling class. If people are capable of turning in their loved ones to the FBI for participating in the Capitol riot, what is to stop them from doing the same to a communist who they perceived as a threat to the established order? It is very possible for a communist who says things like "the working class must take its power by force" and "an international proletarian revolution is necessary for the liberation of humanity" to be denounced as an "ideologically inspired violent extremist" who is planning for insurrection. Workers who have been communicating through online platforms to organize, especially in countries

where it is dangerous to be a communist, are also potential targets.

Our role as militants

In reality, liberal democracy and the movement currently represented by Trump, whether it be of a truly "fascist" flavor, or whether it sticks to some authoritarian and reactionary democracy as its preferred state of affairs, are both two sides of the same capitalist coin. This is something which we do not say lightly or metaphorically. We are not simply stating that there are mere similarities between the technocratic neoliberalism of Biden and the Democratic Party, and the rigid and reactionary right-wing populism of Trump and his Republican Party. Even in the "purest" bourgeois democratic republic, in which the democratic rights of capitalism were extended to all (such as the right to vote or protest), it would still contain the same system of class domination and exploitation as the most authoritarian and fascist state would. Whether or not the working class can vote, whether the liberal or reactionary bourgeoisie gets to impose their own specific capitalism onto the working class, it still remains the same daily life for the workers. They wake up, go to work, run errands, and return home, with some hours of leisure in between, but still for the most part a life of work. And even with the vote, they are fundamentally excluded from the political process, as even the vote is just a sham tool that only gives the workers the choice to legitimize their own domination and exploitation.

At the end of the day, the point is that we can oppose fascist groups without supporting the police or the opposing bourgeois faction. The working class will likely face the brunt of the repercussions triggered by the actions of the Capitol rioters. With a Biden presidency to restore the status quo, the Democrats can go back to pandering working class voters with promises of a better tomorrow, only to turn around and increase funding for police, legalize evictions, suspend stimulus payments, and kill off

essential workers through a lack of COVID-safety precautions.

This is why we, as internationalist communists, must adhere tightly and consistently to our class positions whenever these sorts of squabbles between the different factions of the capitalist class arise. We stick to the position that liberal democracy and fascism are in reality two sides of the same coin. Further, we stick to the position that there is no war worth fighting except for the class war. The Storming of the Capitol is perhaps a sign of future events to come. Tensions may continue to exacerbate between the different factions of the capitalist class within the United States. Protests, altercations, and confrontations between the two (or more) sides may heat up and potentially escalate into more violence. However, we must still carry on with a firm class compass and a conviction that the working class should not be made to pay for any of the crises or issues of the capitalists. Workers should not be turned into cannon fodder on the streets for bourgeois political theater.

We keep our eyes on the prize that is worldwide working class revolution. The working class has many enemies, but that fact shouldn't distract us from our goal or allow us to align ourselves even momentarily with any side of the bourgeoisie. Collaborating with the liberal faction of the capitalist class, or even the left wing of capital, will never put an end to fascism or any sort of reactionary threat. If we actually want to liberate humanity from the oppression and exploitation that plagues us, we will have to put to death the cruel and barbaric system that is capitalism. Anything less is just playing make-believe with politics.

We will continue our work of education, agitation, and organization, despite attempts by the ruling class to divert our efforts towards more reformist goals put forth by the latest political scandal. The Internationalist Workers' Group has for the past year been committed to forming an educational group that is open to the public,

where we discuss and learn about the positions of the Internationalist Communist Tendency and the history of the Communist Left, as well as how we can engage in the class as militants. During COVID, where many people find themselves isolated indoors for long intervals of time, such work helps to plant the seeds of class consciousness and fill the gap at a period where in-person demonstrations are either difficult or unsafe to attend.

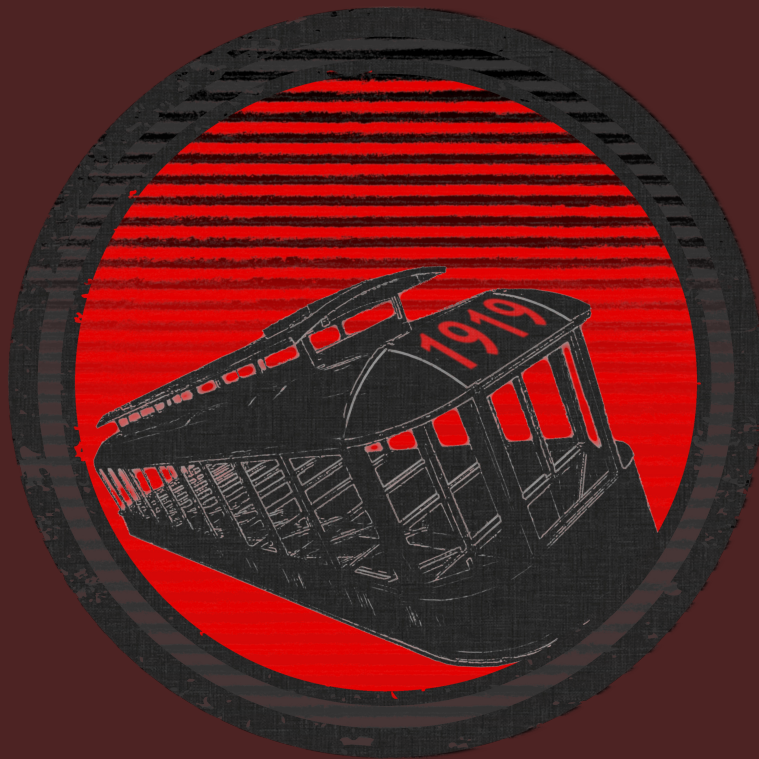
In the workplace we also remain committed to our project of creating a new world. It is there that we continue to encourage our militants to agitate and organize amongst their coworkers in the interests of having the class fight back against the heightened and ferocious attacks of the capitalist class. We must fight against the living standards imposed on us, because the reality of conditions are unlivable. Whether it is a matter of wage cuts, no hazard pay, lack of PPE, being forced to work longer hours or perform greater responsibilities without a raise, or the general exploitation that results from wage labor, the militants of the IWG and ICT affiliates always fight for the internationalist communist programme.

This is the only choice for creating a better world. Workers and students, both employed and unemployed, militants must struggle for the internationalist communist programme and the revitalization of the class struggle in their workplace, their school, or their locality wherever possible. We have a world to win.

EL & JC

About Us

1919 is a joint political journal between the two North American affiliates of the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT), Klasbatalo and Internationalist Workers' Group. We fight toward the historic task of the working class, communism. Communism is the organization of society directly focused on the fulfillment of need in which the antagonism between the individual and collective is abolished. It is a world which knows no classes, property, state, or bureaucracy. In short, communism is the abolition of political society. To achieve this task, we believe the working class must fight on its own terrain to defend against the bosses' attacks, and to push forth its own interest. We are for the formation of the world communist party. We do not believe that we alone will be this party. Rather, we see ourselves participating in the real work that is necessary for its formation.



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